





THE JUNIOR CUP

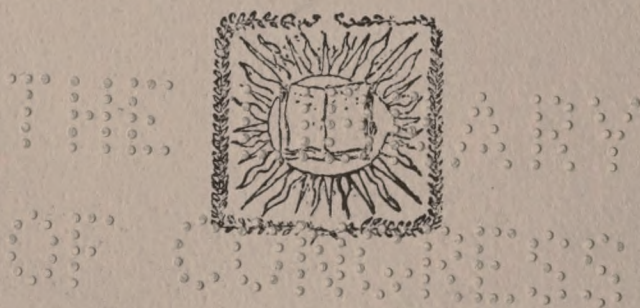


"THE CUP WAS WON!"

THE JUNIOR CUP

BY ALLEN FRENCH

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
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TO MY MOTHER

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THE JUNIOR CUP

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CHAPTER I



HE hurried steps of the father, descending the stairs, were heard through the closed door. The son turned away to hide the working of his face, and examined the pictures on the mantel, but through a film of tears. Mr. Holmes looked at the boy curiously and kindly, revolving in his mind the words which in private the father had said to him.

“Chester is a good boy,” Mr. Fiske had said. “He is perfectly healthy and absolutely normal, like any other boy. There is only one fault of which I wish him cured: he has been spoiled by his aunt and sisters until he thinks too much of himself. His mother is dead, and my own sister has brought the children up. I don’t say,” said the earnest father, striving for exactitude, “that he is

conceited, but the home has been made to revolve about him so much that now he takes as his own many things which when he gets to college he will have to prove his right to. He is a clever boy; he is quick in his studies and good in his sports. I have seen in him," said the business man, smiling faintly as he thought of his own youth, "many things that reminded me of his father at his age. I was clever in the field and at the desk, I was an overweening, presumptuous boy, and I had to learn the things that did me good at an age when they were very hard to learn, and when conceit had almost become a habit settled for life. Now Chester is not too old to learn; he is only fifteen; and I mean that he shall not have such a hard time as I had. I intend that his college life shall not be made bitter by unpopularity. I cannot teach him at home; there is a whole regiment of feminine relatives against me—sisters, aunts, and cousins. So I give him to you, Mr. Holmes, for the two months of summer, hoping that in your camp of boys the nonsense will be knocked out of him."

"We will do it, sir, if we can," answered Mr. Holmes. "The thing is done every summer with more than one. Yet it is not always possible to

make more than a beginning. It is difficult to change in two months the habit of years."

"You shall have him next year, too," said Mr. Fiske, "if this year does him the slightest good. And I myself will meanwhile work," he added grimly, "to reduce the pedestal which they keep for him at home. It is much to me that my son shall avoid his father's mistakes."

The expression with which Mr. Fiske spoke, half of determination, half of affection, lingered long in Mr. Holmes's memory. He saw then, and remembered, where the boy got his firm square jaw and high broad forehead, and from whom he received his pleasant brown eyes. "The lad is his father's son," he thought. "There are two ways of reaching him: through his mind and through his heart. He will respond to reason and to affection. If our system at camp is what it always has been, we shall give his nature the inclination that we wish." As Mr. Holmes thought thus, Mr. Fiske rose to go, and called the boy into the room.

"Good-by, Chester," he said seriously; "I wish you a good time. Remember, you must show these thirty boys, among whom you spend your summer, what you are. You must be what you pretend to be, and nothing less. Good luck to you."

They shook hands. "Good-by, father," said the boy, his trouble appearing in his face. So the earnest man, who wished his son to be better than himself, went away; so the boy, separated for the first time from his home, turned to hide his tears; and so the experienced trainer of boys, than whose work nothing is more delicate, his sympathies all enlisted in the struggle, studied for a while in silence the problem which he was to work out during the summer. At last he spoke.

"Well, Chester," he said cheerfully, "how do you like my room?"

Chester's healthy boy-nature was already asserting itself. He answered quickly, and soon was absorbed in the stories which his new guardian told him of life at Harvard. For it was in a tutor's room that they stood, and Mr. Holmes, Boston born and bred, and Harvard taught, was steeped in the traditions of the college.

"I suppose that some day I shall have a room like this," said the boy, his eyes sparkling with excitement, "with an oar over the mantel, and boxing-gloves hanging up, and silver cups about."

Mr. Holmes looked, smiling, at the trophies upon the walls. The oar was a reminder of a boat race with Yale; his medals, his cups, were not

many, but he knew they were choice, and indicated athletic distinction. Thinking of his past, of a position honestly earned and honorably held, conscious, too, of iron muscles under his sober citizen's clothes, able at any time to enter the field and dispute the palm with any later comers—with these half-active thoughts of pride of power, he looked at the boyish, undeveloped figure before him, and asked:

“Are n't you a little too sure of what may never happen? Not every one can win even a medal.”

The boy's face fell, but it brightened when Mr. Holmes said: “Yet there is one thing you can win this very summer if you are able.”

“And what is that?” cried Chester.

“The Junior Cup,” answered the teacher.

“Oh, what is it? Tell me about it!”

Mr. Holmes looked at his watch before he answered: “We have half an hour before we start for the station. Sit down while I finish packing, and I will tell you about the camp. I must begin at the beginning. The camp is conducted by Mr. Dean, who is much older than I, and more experienced, though I am his chief helper. There will be about thirty boys there this summer, who go there for all sorts of purposes. Some go for their health,

some because they have no father and mother, but only guardians and no home, and some because their father and mother wish them to."

"Tell me why I go," interrupted Chester. "Aunt does not want me to, but father says I must, and he would n't tell me why."

"Then I shall not," answered the teacher, simply.

Chester hung his head at the rebuke, too direct for avoidance or excuse. Yet not so simply was he to learn the lessons of his life. Mr. Holmes continued as if nothing had happened: "The life is very simple: we live in two big shanties; we eat in a third; we bathe in the lake; we play baseball. Every now and then we make a trip and explore the neighboring country—for we live in an out-of-the-way place, on the edge of the White Mountains, and there are hills, or even mountains, to climb, and seven lakes within seven miles of us. There is enough to do to occupy us for the summer in having a good time, and it easily happens that the sick boys get well, and the well boys get over their troubles, just while we seem to be doing nothing." He paused to fold a coat.

"And the Cup?" asked Chester, after a moment.

Mr. Holmes went on as well as he could for the constant moving necessitated by his packing. His voice sounded now clearly in the study, now muffled

in the closet, now faint from the sleeping-room beyond. But Chester, listening closely, heard all he said.

"The whole life of the camp," Mr. Holmes said, "is athletic. From morning to night we run, we work with our hands, we swim, we play games. It is quite proper that some recognition be given to the one that does the best. So at the end of every year there is held a competition, in which the boys, little and big, must enter. The big boys are the Seniors, of the ages of seventeen and over. The little boys are the Juniors, of sixteen years and under. The events are the ordinary track and field events at any athletic games. In both classes a cup is given to the boy that does the best all-round work."

"And I can win the Junior Cup?" asked Chester, eagerly. "I, all alone?"

"If you are able," said the other, dryly. Chester again hung his head, and this time blushed. "There is little in this world, Chester, my boy, that any one of us can accomplish alone."

Mr. Holmes had locked his bag, and looked again at his watch.

"Come," he said, "let us go. It is early, but we may be delayed."

In the cars to the depot, in the noisy streets,

they talked little. In the waiting-room at the great station, over in one corner, they found gathered a little group that made an outcry as Chester and his conductor were perceived. The boy hung back as Mr. Holmes walked forward to greet his friends. He noticed how they crowded to welcome him, boys smaller than himself, boys of his own age, and boys so big that they seemed like men. And on the edges of the group, somewhat apart, were boys that said nothing, but simply looked on, newcomers like himself, shy among strangers.

Presently Mr. Holmes led Chester to a pleasant-faced gentleman, of middle age and erect, yet gray-haired. About him were the littlest boys, who, as Chester came forward, stood aside and stared. The other boys in the group were looking at him inquisitively, and Chester felt that his measure was being taken. In the bustling crowd, in the noise, he suddenly felt alone.

"This is Mr. Dean," said Mr. Holmes. "This is Chester Fiske, sir, one of the new boys."

"I am glad to see you, Chester," said the pleasant master, taking his hand. "I hope that you will have a jolly time with us this summer. Your father has written me of you."

For a moment, in the cheerful greeting, Chester

again felt among friends. But a boy came, and pulling Mr. Dean's sleeve, whispered a question; Mr. Holmes had already turned away to speak to friends; and Chester, quite alone, stood with the sense of his loneliness upon him. About him, the boys talked and laughed, or stood silent. He heard stories in progress of winter adventures, or noisy reminiscences of the past summer. Boarding-school boys were comparing notes, and a Groton and a St. Mark's boy, had they not been old friends, would have come to blows over the merits of their schools. Chester felt that he was still being examined, and for a time did not dare to raise his eyes to face his new companions. At last, as one near by evidently shifted position to look at him the better, Chester raised his head and looked the other squarely in the eye.

It was a boy a little older than himself, taller, and heavier. He was dressed in long trousers, while Chester was dressed in short; he wore a white collar, while Chester wore a cheviot shirt; he had a watch, while Chester had none. His face was fair and open, his eyes keen, his mouth handsome; curly hair framed his temples, under a straw hat. He stood in an attitude of self-confidence, one hand in his pocket, his hat tilted slightly backward.

He looked at Chester for a moment coolly and critically, then came forward and offered him his hand.

"You 're a new boy," he said, "and I 'm an old one. We 'll have to know each other soon, and might as well begin now. My name is Marshall Moore."

There was an ease and fluency about the address that buried Chester deep in his own insignificance. He could only take the stranger's hand and stammer out his own name.

"Yes, I know," said the other; "I heard Mr. Holmes introduce you. Awfully nice, is n't he? And Mr. Dean? But you wait till they catch you doing something that they don't like! And wait till you ask them to let you do something they don't want you to do! Do you play baseball?"

The question was boyish, and loosened Chester's tongue.

"Oh, yes," he said eagerly, "I play ball. I was catcher on our nine."

"Is that so?" said the other, politely. "And do you run? Can you run the hundred yards?"

"No," answered Chester. "That is, I never did."

"Well, you 'll learn. You 'll have to. And can you swim?"



“‘YOU ’RE A NEW BOY,’ HE SAID, ‘AND I ’M AN OLD ONE.’”

"Only a little," confessed Chester.

"You 'll have to learn that, too," said his acquaintance. "I hope you 'll like to be ducked."

"Oh, Marshall!" cried some one from behind.

"Excuse me," said the boy, and went to answer the call. Again, as Chester saw around him only the backs of boys, or heads turned away, he was immersed in the gulf of loneliness. But some one rubbed against him, and a voice at his elbow said, "Hullo!"

It was a smaller boy that this time Chester turned and faced, dark-haired and rosy, full of health, snub-nosed and straight-mouthed, brimming good nature.

"Say," he said confidingly, "is n't it horrid to be a new boy? I 've been a new boy lots of times at lots of places, and I 'm not used to it yet."

"Oh," cried Chester, with relief, "you 're a new boy, too!"

"Yes," said the other, easily. "My name 's Rawson Lewis, but they call me Rat, 'cause I used to keep a white rat. I heard you say your name. I go to a military school in winter. Where do you go?"

"Oh, just to an ordinary school."

"And live at home?" asked the other. A wist-

ful expression flitted across his face. "I have n't any home, or any father or mother."

Chester could not understand how a boy could be without father or mother; in his world at least one parent was a necessary part of every boy's equipment. For a moment he wished to inquire; but fearing to ask delicate personal questions, he changed the subject.

"How old are you?" he asked.

"Fourteen," said the other, promptly; "but I'm small for my age. How old are you?"

"Fifteen," answered Chester, with the consciousness that he was large for his age.

"You're rather big," commented the other, in easy conversation. "I hope we'll sleep near each other. I wonder what they do to the new boys, anyway. Do you suppose they'll haze us?"

"Haze us?" asked Chester, in astonishment. The idea was a new one, and he paused to consider it a moment. Then he added stiffly, "I guess they won't haze me."

"Oh, they won't?" said the Rat, coolly. "Do you suppose that they won't haze you if they want to, just because your name happens to be Chester Fiske? I never saw big boys anywhere that would n't haze new boys if they got a chance."

Chester would have stiffened the more at the bluff directness of the other's remarks, but his curiosity got the better of his dignity. "Then you 've been hazed?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," said the other, "more than once. Have you ever read 'Tom Brown at Rugby,' the tossing in sheets and all that? Well, it 's worse than that when they march you around the yard in your night-clothes, and make you shin the flag-pole and make a speech from half-way up."

"But do the teachers allow it?" asked Chester.

"Oh, they 're never around just then," answered the Rat.

"Well," said a voice, at which they both started and turned, "you need n't worry; you won't be hazed at the camp."

It was one of the biggest of the boys, who, in a blue serge suit, white straw hat, cross tie, and choker collar, looked like a college student, which, in fact, in a few months he was to be. He stood and looked at the two smaller boys with a good-natured smile.

"We won't haze you; you need n't worry," he repeated. "But new boys in camp must learn to behave properly, or it must be taught them. Now this boy," he said, suddenly collaring the Rat,

"looks as if he knew that already. Do you?" he asked, shaking the little boy slightly; "do you, do you, do you?"

Chester stood indignant, but the Rat adroitly stepped on the big boy's toe. "Yes, sir," he said.

"Why, that's right"; and seizing Rawson by the armpits, the big boy raised him till their faces were on a level. "I thought you looked as if you knew something. But you," he said, dropping the Rat and turning to Chester, "look as if you would n't be happy for a time in camp. You don't like rough boys, do you?"

Chester was silent. He could not see if this were seriousness or play.

"Well, cheer up"; and the big boy laid his hand on Chester's shoulder. "You'll get used to us in time; we are n't so bad as we seem." As he turned away, Marshall Moore came up again.

"Who is that?" asked Chester of him, eagerly.

"Oh, that?" asked the curly-head. "That's George Tenney, the biggest boy in camp, except Jim Pierce. They two think they own the place. If you don't look out and be nice to them, you'll get into trouble."

"Why, is he mean?" asked Chester, always sweeping in his use of adjectives.

"Well," said Marshall, with a rising inflection, "m-m—" He raised his eyebrows and his shoulders, and turned away.

"Who 's that?" asked the Rat.

"His name is Marshall Something," answered Chester. "Don't you think he is a nice-looking fellow?"

"No," answered little Rawson, sturdily, "I don't. I like the big fellow best."

Now appeared before the boys Mr. Holmes and Mr. Dean, herding them together like sheep, and driving them to the train. A few relatives and friends went with them, and stood by the train until it started. So began the long journey to the north, and the jolting of the cars shook the boys up together like coins in a purse, till each new boy knew by sight and voice and name each one of the campers. Then a drive among the New Hampshire hills in two great barges brought them all to the view of a lake, with long low buildings among the trees on the hither side.

"This is the camp," said Marshall, who during much of the journey had been at Chester's side. Though he was a year older than Chester, they had at once struck up a friendship. "These are the shanties where we sleep; that is the dining-

room and kitchen; there is the pump where we wash. See, the flag is flying for our arrival! Won't we have a jolly summer! Hooray!"

With shouts the boys tumbled from the teams; with delight the old campers instantly dispersed about the buildings, seeking their known haunts; with curiosity the new boys craned their necks and looked about them at the place which was to keep them for the summer.

"Come with me," said Marshall; and he led Chester about the camp. He showed him the shanties where the boys slept on wire cots placed side by side; he explained at the pump how fresh boys were sometimes pumped upon; he showed him the dining-room and the kitchen, where the man cook was receiving the uproarious greetings of the boys. At last he led him to the edge of the gentle slope that overlooked the lake.

"There is the boat-house," said Marshall. "In that grove of trees down there we undress for our swim every morning. Beyond them is a raft which we can't see. Do you see that island over there, with the one tall tree? That is just half a mile from the raft. And that point of land across the lake we call Terror, from *terra firma*, you know, to distinguish it from the Island. It's just a mile

from the boat-house. Those are our two distance swims, and you can't go out in a rowboat until you have swum to the Island, nor go in a sailboat until you have swum Terror."

"Why is that?" asked Chester.

"For safety," said Marshall. "Don't you see?"

"I see," said Chester. "But is n't it hard to swim a mile?"

"Oh, no," said Marshall, easily; "I 've done it. Several of the boys do it every summer, and it 's an event for the Cup."

They stood silent for a moment; then, half aloud, Chester uttered his thought: "Then I must swim Terror to win the Junior Cup."

Marshall turned round on him sharply, and his voice was metallic as he asked:

"So you mean to win the Junior Cup?"

CHAPTER II



HE characters of his new acquaintances, from the bright Marshall and the little Rat to tall Jim Pierce and big George Tenney, walked all that night in Chester's brain in mixed and curious dreams. They scattered in the morning before a mighty sound, and the boy opened his startled eyes upon a scene of quiet, where, to his ringing ears, the echo of a bugle seemed yet to linger.

"What was that?" he asked, astonished.

He raised himself in bed, and looked along a line of cots, each under blankets bearing a figure, some straight, some twisted, some quiet still, but some already moving. From the convolutions at his side, after much heaving, emerged at last the ruddy face of the Rat.

"That was reveille," said he. "If I don't know anything else in this camp, I know that."

"And what does it mean?"

"It means get up," said the little fellow, springing out of bed. Chester followed more slowly, and then from all the cots the boys, some still sleepy, some eager for the events of the day, arose and dressed.

The day before had been for Chester a day of new impressions, which came so fast that each seemed to blot out its predecessor. Cast among boys not one of whom he had ever seen before, their many personalities confused while they delighted him. He came among the helter-skelter crowd with a mind filled with home-made prejudices, quick to condemn for ill-fitting clothes or awkward manner, hasty at deducing from a hat or a boot the character of its owner. Yet still he had imbibed from his father some of the natural American respect for a man, whoever he be, and in the uproar of the railway journey, rubbing elbows with boys of all sizes, who first of all were boys and after that were social units, he luckily forgot the inculcations of his aunt for the precepts of his father, and, a boy among boys, made friends with eager interest.

The new day happily removed from Chester all temptations to return to his prejudices, for each boy, after his wash at the pump, put on a regu-

lation costume of flannel shirt and homespun trousers, with cap and belt and stockings of the camp colors. Nothing was to distinguish them but face and figure, and at the clamorous breakfast-table, and soon after at the not less noisy ball-field, blue bodies and party-colored legs made, in externals, absolute uniformity. For the whole summer nothing but personality was to show, and in time of need a boy could be helped by character alone.

"What did you think of Chester Fiske?" asked Mr. Dean of Mr. Holmes. They stood on the piazza of the dining-hall, where shouts reached them from the distant ball-field. "He seemed a pleasant, manly boy."

"You know what his father sent him here for," answered the younger man. "I think that he was not wrong in anticipating trouble. The boy has been coddled by his female relatives till he has imbibed a few unfortunate ideas. He does n't, for instance, understand anything like roughness. I noted that he was very stiff yesterday when one of the boys slapped him on the shoulder. I think his aunt has spoiled him with the idea that he is something finer than other boys, and I should guess that he has never had much to do with boys older than himself. I think that it will come hard

to him to submit to the authority of other boys, even of George Tenney, for instance. He has been accustomed to persuasion, and I imagine that he will take correction very hard. It's time for the swim, sir."

Mr. Holmes took down the bugle and blew it.

"You will be at the shore, will you not?" said Mr. Dean, a little anxiously, "to be sure that no unnecessary roughness occurs. I always worry the first day on account of the ducking."

"I'll be there, sir," said the other, cheerfully. "I've spoken to the two oldest boys, to be sure that none of the little ones are really frightened, and that no boy is kept under too long."

The boys came flocking from ball-field and woods, hurrying for their bath. Among them, George Tenney and Jim Pierce were fooling with little Rawson, whose adroitness at baseball and quickness of reply in boyish jests pleased their fancy. Chester came with Marshall; he had played well, for in his first scratch game he had made a home run. A mild elation filled his breast; he noticed that the smaller boys already looked at him with respect, and he spoke with importance of his performances in games at home. Jim Pierce noticed him—the tall, quiet New-Yorker,

handsome as Mercury. "That boy is too fine," he said to himself.

About seventy feet off the lake shore was moored the raft, to which, with shouts and splashing, the adventurous spirits hastened when once their swimming-tights were donned. Himself ready for the plunge, but hesitating, Chester stood and watched the scramble as the foremost reached the raft. At his side was little Rawson; Marshall was already in the water.

"Don't you hate to go out there?" asked the Rat. "I do."

Shouts came to them from the raft. "Here, all new boys, come out here!"

"Well," said Rawson, with a sigh, "here goes!" From the rock where they stood he sprang into the water, and immediately began to swim steadily for the raft.

"Chester," cried some one, "can you swim?"

"Yes," he answered ruefully.

"Come out here, then!"

Slowly he entered the water, and swam to the raft, where, once arrived, he stood with the other new boys awaiting their fate.

His feelings were mixed and unpleasant. He knew what was coming: rough handling, which he

could not avoid or resist. He had ducked boys in his time, but to be ducked himself seemed an entirely different thing; he could not see the reasonableness of it, and was very sullen. He revolved in his mind the idea that because those other boys had been at the camp longer than he, they nevertheless had no right to do with him as they chose. It was the custom of the camp, he knew, that each new boy should be ducked; but what had the custom of the camp to do with him? He saw no way of escaping the test, and slowly grew angry.

Jim Pierce, with a magnificent backward dive, now sprang into the water; half a dozen more of the larger boys followed, Marshall among them. George Tenney, standing on the raft, evidently the master of ceremonies, ordered Marshall out.

"What for?" cried Marshall, in anger.

"Well, stay in, then," answered George; "but don't you touch any of the new boys. You're not to do any of this ducking. I know you too well."

"Very well," said Marshall. "You think you're awful clever, George Tenney."

"Get out, Marshall," said Jim, who swam near him with easy strokes.

Marshall turned to the shore with mutterings of

discontent. George shouted after him, "Don't you duck the little boys, Marshall Moore."

Chester's sullen mood increased as the word "tyrant" came into his mind. He preferred to be ducked by Marshall if he must be ducked by any one. They were tyrants, these two big boys. What right had they to order Marshall so? The right of force, he answered to himself, bombastically. And his anger grew as he saw at the shore Mr. Holmes sitting quietly among the trees. Why did n't he interfere?

Now George approached Rawson and said: "Come, little Rat, get into the water!"

"Don't drown me, now," said Rawson, with a wry face; and he approached the edge of the raft and jumped in. One of the boys in the water approached him, and putting his hand on the shoulder of the swimming boy, forced him under water. It was evident next that he caught him with his feet, and trod him still deeper; then swimming quickly to one side, he waited for the little boy to rise. In a moment Rawson appeared, and began to puff loudly.

"Oh, say," he cried, "that was fine!" The boys laughed, and even some of the trembling new boys laughed with the rest.

"Again," said Jim Pierce; and another boy seized the Rat, and sent him down again. For a longer time he remained under water, and then appearing, laughed as before.

"Once more," cried Jim, and himself seized the little fellow and pushed him down unresisting. Then he himself disappeared, and only bubbles rose. It seemed a long time that they were gone; at last they rose together, the older boy holding up the younger.

"How are you?" he asked.

Rawson was game to the last, for after heavy panting, catching his breath, he said: "Is that all? For if it is n't I am nearly drowned, and if it is I'm all right."

"Get out of this, you rascal," answered Jim, and he pushed the little fellow to the raft, where, climbing out, he sat with his legs in the water to watch the trouble of his companions.

"Oh, not so worse," he said cheerfully, in school-boy slang.

At the shore, among the trees, and a little anxious, Mr. Holmes was talking to himself. "I feel as Mr. Dean does," he said. "These things do the boys good, for the rough test brings out their manhood. And I feel sure that I can trust Jim

and George not to go too far. But I wish we had some kindlier process."

Meanwhile the other boys took their medicine like men, till there were left on the raft only Chester and one other trembling boy. "Oh, are n't you afraid?" cried this poor lad. "You might drown while you were under there!"

George approached him. "Now it is your turn," he said. "Fall in, my boy." But when he put his hand upon his shoulder to urge him to the edge, the boy clung to him frantically and burst out crying.

"Why," said the big boy, half roughly, half kindly. "All right, Useless, you need n't go in. Now, Chester, jump."

But Chester only stood firmly and looked him in the eye. His whole nature steeled itself for resistance. George surveyed him in perfect comprehension.

"You won't?" he asked cheerfully. "We have boys here once in a while that are just like you. I told you yesterday that you would have a hard time getting used to camp. Come now, Chester, do like the other boys, and go in." But Chester would not budge.

"Then squeal, like Tommy here, and we'll let you off."



"SUDDENLY GEORGE RAN CHESTER TO THE EDGE OF THE RAFT AND
PUSHED HIM OVERBOARD."

"No!" said Chester, contemptuously. "I won't squeal!"

Suddenly George seized him with both hands and twirled him round, caught him by the arms from behind, and, with a great shout of laughter, ran him to the edge of the raft and pushed him overboard. With an enormous splash Chester left the raft, but kept his head above water, and in a moment recovered himself. He remained treading water a few yards away from the raft.

"Look out, you fellows," said George, from the raft; "he's dangerous."

And in truth he was dangerous, as with glittering eyes, indignant, he waited who should first approach him. Since he was not a practised swimmer, he could not escape from the encircling boys; and as to returning to the raft, George barred that passage. The boys remained at a little distance, and did not offer to approach him. After a minute the dignity of his position seemed less in Chester's eyes, as he grew tired of the unaccustomed exercise. Then suddenly muscular weariness seized him, and he was on the point of crying out: "Well, duck me, and let's have it over."

But at that moment Jim Pierce disappeared

from the surface, and the water closed over his head with a slight ripple. Chester saw, and caught his breath, knowing that in a moment the lithe figure, gliding like a shadow in the depths, would seize him. For a moment he waited, seeing smiles of triumph on the faces of the waiting boys, and with perplexity he felt that he, who never in his life before had been where neither his own skill nor strength, nor his aunt, nor his family could help him, now could not evade that certain seizure. Then suddenly a firm grasp was laid upon his ankle, and with a gurgle he was dragged under water. The water roared in his ears as it filled them, and with his involuntary, but immediately checked, catching of the breath, it ran into his mouth. The clutch left his ankle and was put upon his shoulders. Down, down he went. He felt that hands and feet were pushing him. It seemed a long time, when suddenly the weight was removed. "I shall go up now," he thought; but still the water rang in his ears, as moments seemed to pass. The breath was bursting in his chest when at last his head emerged from the water.

He shook the water out of his eyes, and caught eagerly for new breath as he looked about him.

The boys were laughing, but in his confusion he did not notice them, for the raft was not where it ought to be, and at first he could not find it. When at last he saw it and struck out for it, the boys behind him called out, "Once more!" and he felt with sudden dread that perhaps they were coming up behind him. But George Tenney called, "No."

"That's enough," he said. "Chester does n't like it, and besides, he does n't seem to be able to swim as well as the others. We'll let him off the rest." He helped the weary boy on to the raft, then, diving deep, engaged with the other boys in a game of tag.

"That 's all over," said the Rat, slipping into the water. "It was n't so bad, after all. But you were foolish, Chester," he said, as he peered over the edge at his friend, now quickly recovering. "Why would n't you let them duck you? Do you think you own the camp?"

"Never mind," said Chester, surlily. Many thoughts ran through his head: the memory of his helplessness; the thought that all the boys, except poor shivering Tommy, were against him in this matter; George's saying that he could not swim so well as the others; the conviction, which

honestly he could not repress, that the ducking was not so bad as might have been; and finally the Rat's frank imputation that he was too important. He could not answer some of these reproaches except by acknowledgment of error—a new experience, a new thought, that among boys, in strictly boyish matters, he could be wrong. In discontent at himself, in growing anger at everything, he sat in sullen silence on the raft.

Rawson thought he had offended, and in his quick, affectionate way he climbed out to beg pardon. "I 'm sorry," he said, putting his clammy hand on Chester's dripping shoulder. "I did n't mean to hurt your feelings, Chester."

Chester shook him off. "Let me alone," he said.

"Oh," said Rawson, drawing back. He stood, puzzled what to say.

Chester sat a moment longer without looking up. That he had rudely repelled a friendly advance brought fresh reproaches to his smarting spirit. Yet he could not bring himself to apologize. He knew that in a moment the waiting boy would speak to him again, and in a sudden access of resentment against any one for being kind to him, he rose hastily, went to the edge of the raft, let himself into the water, and swam quickly

to the shore. Behind him he knew the little fellow stood looking after him with troubled gaze, and in his pain it gave him savage pleasure that he had given pain to some one else.

Splashing by the shore were the little boys who could not swim. On the beach was Marshall, already dressing amid many mutterings. "So you 've got enough, too?" he asked. "I told you what George and Jim were like. They 're a peachy pair, they are, bullying all the little fellows in the camp, and keeping it all to themselves, as if no one else had a right to boss the new boys. Hurry up, Chester, and we will go off somewhere by ourselves."

Mr. Holmes sat at a little distance, with his eye on all the boys in case of accident. Chester knew that he had seen what had passed. "I suppose he thinks I 'm a fool, too," he said angrily, rubbing himself so that the rough towel hurt his skin. "But I don't care; it was mean." And so he dressed, and as the other boys came out of the water at the master's summons, he and Marshall went away into the woods, to work off their discontent by roaming alone until dinner-time. And Marshall told him all the stories that he knew of George Tenney and Jim Pierce.

But poor little Rawson was troubled still, and watched them ruefully as they disappeared among the trees. His sturdy little soul had been seized from the first with an affection for Chester which even his mistakes and his rebuff had not shaken off. A boy—and this is true, let who will gainsay it—is in general a poor judge of other boys. Go among them; witness the down-treading of the weak, the complete rejection of those in any way exceptional or eccentric; and then see in later life how in many cases those boys, misunderstood by their fellows, take their places among men as men of mark. A boy judges by externals alone, by what appears on the surface. But the Rat, led by a true sympathy, which his homeless life had trained and strengthened rather than weakened and destroyed, had seized upon Chester in his heart, and stubbornly refused to give him up.

“What are you bothering about, Rawson?” asked George of him. “Is it Chester Fiske? Cheer up; he is n’t worth it; he ’s only another one like Marshall.”

“Oh, George, he is n’t,” cried the little fellow, eagerly. “He ’s a nice boy; I know he is.”

“And you never knew him before yesterday?” asked Jim Pierce, in some wonder.

"No; but he 's a nice fellow, and he 'll show it yet, if you 'll only wait."

"Well, he 'd better hurry, then," said George; and, as if dismissing the subject, he began to dry himself with his towel.

"I 'll make him show it," cried Rawson, earnestly.

George turned and regarded him soberly.

"Well, *you* are a nice little fellow, anyway!" he said.

"Never mind about me," said the Rat, dully. He was cast down that the other boys would not believe him. But Mr. Holmes approached him and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"Stick to it, Rawson," he said. "Others besides you are interested in Chester."

And Mr. Holmes, when he returned to camp, described the whole incident to Mr. Dean. "I did not interfere," he said, "because I think Chester is the kind of boy that learns best by experience. He is a boy of mind and character, and I think that the lesson which we wish him to learn will most surely be mastered by leaving him for a while to himself. His experiences may be bitter, but they will be very salutary."

Yet still for a while Chester was to persist in

his headstrong way. Just before dinner he came face to face with George and Jim, and George spoke to him kindly, with the thought of Rawson in his mind.

“I am sorry, Chester,” he said, “if we were too rough for you this morning.”

But Chester flung away. “Oh, yes,” he said over his shoulder; “a lot you ’re sorry!”

CHAPTER III



HE memory of his ducking stuck in Chester's mind, and was not rendered less bitter by subsequent impressions. It was soon evident that the older boys, their first advances repelled, were not disposed to extend to him any special kindnesses. Little Rawson stood high in their favor, as did several of the other new boys; and their immediate followers, a sort of feudal servitorship, formed around George and Jim a band from which—Chester felt it sometimes with regret, sometimes with stubborn pride—he was excluded. It was very evident that these were the boys that got the most pleasure out of camp life. There were nearly twenty of them, and their jollifications were constant. They split into parties for boating, fishing, and tramping, in all of which pleasures Chester was cast upon the society of Marshall or the few remaining boys.

Of this small remainder some followed Marshall as a sort of leader. The others, a half-dozen of them, were either boys that chummed in pairs, or solitary individuals who, when opportunity offered, went in quiet about their own pursuits, absorbed in their own thoughts. Those who clustered around Marshall were mostly of the smaller boys, personalities without remark, except that miserable Tommy, whose lacking spirit made him a fit errand-boy for him that would throw him a sweetmeat or kind words. These Marshall gave in plenty; he always seemed to have enough of candy, and his honeyed tongue dropped compliments to lime poor Tommy's stumbling feet.

With Chester he was more bluff; yet the sweet words had their effect, though hid in spice. A bewildering maze was spun about poor Chester, formed of Marshall's words and actions. For now his athletic excellence would carelessly be praised, and now he was appealed to for information upon some point of boyish lore; now his help would be desired in the launching of a boat or the making of a kite, and now his advice would be asked in some undertaking of momentary importance. And like the poor chicken that takes the bread though steeped in wine, our boy swallowed each new piece

of flattery, and as it warmed his heart he thought that it was good.

Yet for all this he had a sense of vague dissatisfaction which never left him, even as the weeks passed. That necessity for attention, encouragement, praise, so carefully cultivated by his indulgent aunt, drove him to the society of those who would give it him. Yet his native sense of fairness, an honesty inherited from generations of rigid New England pietists, pricked him like a bur, not sharp, but constant; and his uncomfortable conscience, Puritan still in spite of occasional infiltrations of alien stock, kept uneasy the thinking mind which Mr. Holmes trusted confidently, and which Marshall wished to lull to quiet. For Chester knew, and he could not conceal from himself the knowledge, that in athletics, as well as in his mental quickness, he was no more remarkable than many others in the camp.

In the two general sports of baseball and swimming there was no line drawn between the followers of George and those of Marshall. For of the thirty boys in camp not all played baseball, and of those that played not all played well. A bare eighteen were found to make up two nines, who day after day disputed the palm with varying

success; and there Chester and Marshall played with the rest. The swim occurred regularly every day at the same hour; for fear of accidents, no boy was allowed to bathe except with the others, when Mr. Holmes and the two older boys were there to keep a watchful eye on all the rest. So it happened that every day, in the morning at the lake, in the afternoon at the ball-field, Chester had constant opportunity to measure himself with the other boys. And what he found was not pleasing to him.

"You don't use your feet right in swimming, Chester," said to him one day Rawson, as he watched his friend swimming by the raft. "Your kick is all wrong."

"I can swim as fast as you," said Chester, quickly.

"Try it, now," said quiet Jim, who stood looking on. "Jump in, little Rat, and race him to the shore."

Half reluctant, half willing, Rawson put himself at Chester's side. "It does n't prove anything if you beat me," he said. "Your kick might be wrong, all the same." But when they started at the word he forged slowly ahead. Laying his head sideways in the water, swimming with the underhand side stroke, he beat Chester by several

feet in the race to the shore. Much cast down, yet endeavoring not to show it, Chester regained the raft. He felt that the other boys had been interested in the race, and had an uncomfortable sense that they were glad of his defeat.

"It 's true, Chester," said George Tenney, who had been looking on critically. "You have a poor stroke. Watch me, now, and I 'll show you. This is the way you swim. Now," he said, after a few strokes, "compare that with this. Do you see the difference?"

"Yes," said Chester, watching closely, interested in spite of his mortification.

"Well," said George, treading water, "bear that in mind, now, and practise it. It makes all the difference in the world, in a distance swim, whether each stroke sends you ahead five feet or three."

In diving, too, he found that he had something to learn, and that a general sprawl which carries one under water, though it may be received in some circles as a dive, in others is frankly called a "belly-flopper." Chester's first performance, in the style that his sisters applauded, was received by the boys, many of them experts, and all critics, at first with silence, and then with delight.

"My!" said one, and said no more.

"That must have hurt," said another, judicially.

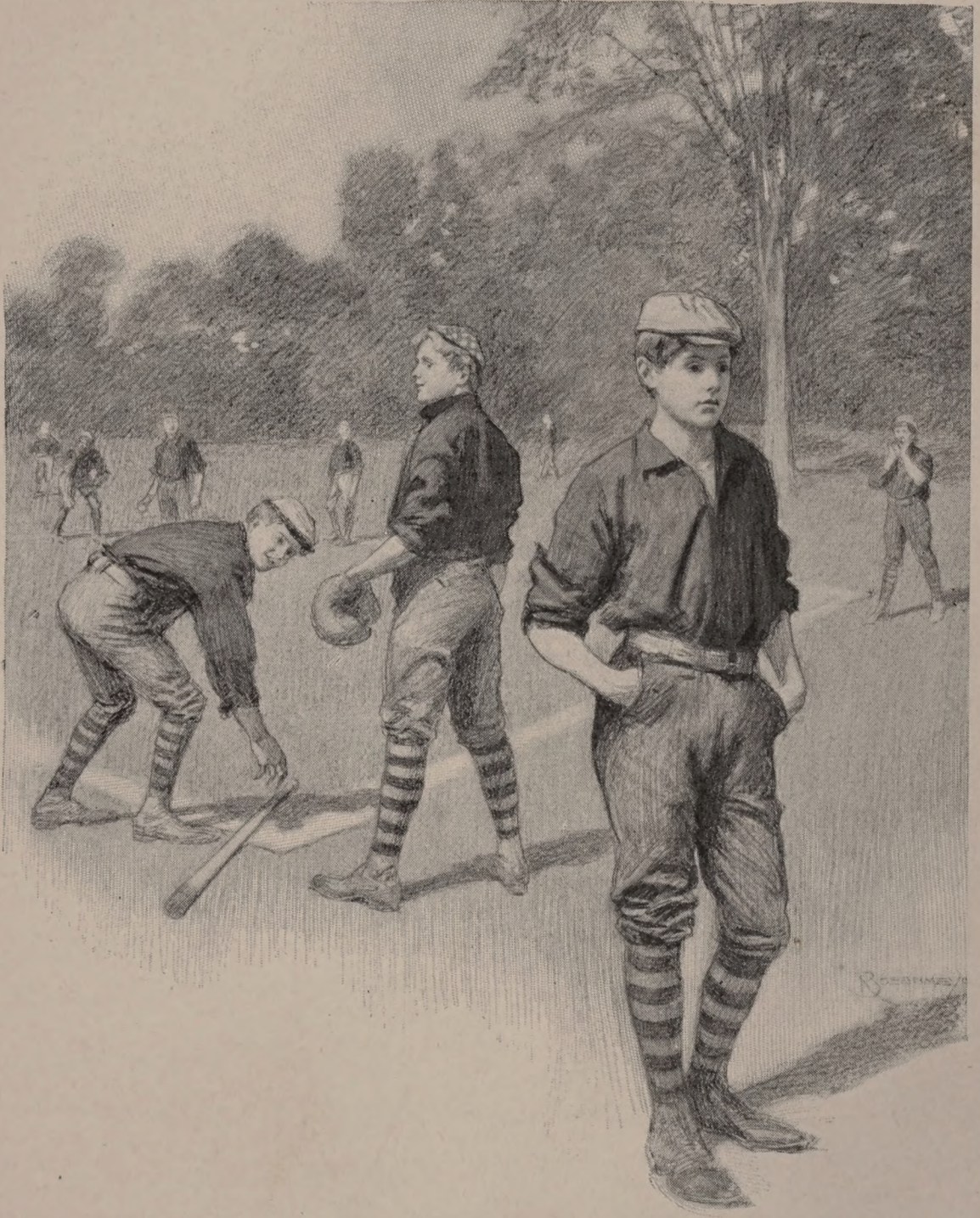
"Say, Chester," called a third, "come out here and let us see how pink you are all up and down your front."

Chester was too sulky to speak.

"You did n't do it right, Chester," said Mr. Holmes, kindly, from his boat. "You must get your feet higher up in the air, so that your head and body go in clean, without a splash. And your legs ought to be together, not apart; and straight, not bent. Watch Rawson, now."

And so for the second time Chester had to acknowledge that the Rat could beat him.

On the baseball-field, further, he found that he had by no means the easy supremacy that was his at home. For never, as Mr. Holmes had surmised, had he played with boys older than himself. His first home run was not duplicated, for as soon as the nines were once steadily at work their pitchers got down into first-class training. Day after day he stood up to Jim Pierce, who befooled him with curves. Game after game he struck out, not once, but oftener, while, try as he might, it seemed that when he hit the ball it never would go outside the diamond. With discouragement,



"GAME AFTER GAME CHESTER STRUCK OUT."

he saw other boys make fierce grounders, or long flies to the out-field; and he heard remarks that showed him that he was considered a poor batter.

At last Mr. Holmes, who sometimes played and sometimes watched, offered Chester a suggestion. He spoke with a thoughtful air that would have shown the boy, had he been quick at noticing, that his batting had been the subject of the master's careful study. "I think, Chester," he said, "that you do not take enough pains in judging the ball. I 'm afraid that you 've been used to pitchers that could n't curve, for the moment that Jim pitches you decide where the ball is to go, and then you 'swat' at it, as the boys say, and you either miss it, or hit it so that it does n't go very far. Is n't that so, Jim?"

Jim laughed from the pitcher's box. "Yes, that 's so, Mr. Holmes," he said. "Chester 's too hot-headed for a good batter. He strikes at anything. All I have to do is to give him three bad balls, and he strikes himself out."

"You see, Chester," said the master, smiling, "Jim has been studying you, and he knows all your weaknesses. Now you turn to and study him, and see if you can't get the better of him."

On Chester's nine George Tenney was pitcher.

He threw a furious, uncertain ball, which Chester, who was the only one that had had experience behind the bat, was expected to hold. It was a new experience when the first whizzing ball struck aside his hands and caught him full upon the mask. The second ball landed upon his unprotected right hand.

"My dear boy! My dear boy!" cried George. "You must n't do that! You won't have a finger left to throw with. Catch every ball in your mit."

"How can I," asked Chester, "when they come on my right side?"

"Why, don't you know?" asked George. "Here," he said, turning to the first-baseman, "show Chester how to get his mit in the way of a ball." So the game was suspended for a few moments while Chester took a lesson in the use of the glove.

They struck deep, those lessons at the lake and on the field. In spite of biting mortification, Chester was persistent in the attempt to overcome his faults, and he learned to put his pride in his pocket and take a lesson from another boy. It became with him a familiar idea that others could surpass him. And slowly he mastered the best swimming stroke; slowly he learned how to throw

his rigid body at the right angle into the waiting water; slowly he acquired the quick, unerring judgment necessary for the catcher or the batter.

"You make me tired, Chester," said to him Jim one day, as, dropping his bat, our boy trotted leisurely to first base. "A base hit last time you came to the bat, and now a base on balls."

"Oh," said Rawson, who followed Chester to the plate, "Chester 's getting a good eye, he is."

And these words were sweet as honey to Chester's soul, eager for praise, for he was learning to know the praise that was honorably earned. For this reason he grew tired, sometimes, of the praise that he received from Marshall; yet he was loyal to the one boy in camp—let us except the Rat—who from the first showed him unvarying kindness. And so he continued in Marshall's society, rejecting sometimes, though with regret, the requests which Rawson made him to come with some of the other boys. For he knew well that he was Marshall's best companion, and that without him his friend would have only Tommy and the other insignificants for associates.

Yet there existed in Chester always an uncertainty as to what sort of a boy the other was. He saw of him nothing but his best side, and that was

fine and fair enough; but he knew that other boys in the camp, little Rawson for instance, drew away from Marshall as one draws from pitch, which is fine and fair as it flows from its tree, but sticks and dirties where it touches. Chester did not yet know how to read in the face what lies in the heart, nor as yet had enough occurred to reveal him to himself as ignorant and inexperienced. He had not enough distrust of his own judgment to study carefully each action of his companion, and so, with his instinctive desire to go where boys were kind to him, he paid little attention to that other instinct that told him something was wrong. And, for his part, Marshall mistook the boy he had to deal with, deeming him at last ready to share in the acts in which he took pleasure. And so in the end that happened which caused a breach between them, and threw Chester entirely upon his own resources.

One day Chester, sitting on his cot just sealing a letter to his home, looked up and saw Marshall and Tommy stealthily approaching. Under his arm Marshall carried a square box with familiar label, and Tommy followed him as a cat follows the cook that bears a dish.

“Come along, Chester,” said Marshall. “Here’s something for us three.”

"Marshmallows!" cried Chester, springing up.
"Let's eat them here!"

"No; out in the woods," said Marshall. "The others won't interrupt us there."

Out in the woods, Marshall opened the box of the floury confection, and handed the marshmallows generously about.

"They are fresh!" cried Tommy, in ecstasy.
"M-m—m-m!" And he filled his mouth.

"Tommy would eat anything if it were sweet," said Marshall, humorously, while Chester, too, was amused at the sight. "Poor Tom! I believe he would put sugar on his meat."

But as they sat eating and joking, a knot of boys burst suddenly into their retreat, and Marshall closed the box in confusion, endeavoring to conceal it. Chester saw with surprise that this was no accidental interruption. The newcomers were three—Jim Pierce, Rawson, and Archie Simons, the smallest boy in camp. Though Jim was quiet and composed as usual, the other two were excited; Archie had been crying, and tears were still on his cheeks, while Chester noticed, with great astonishment, that Rawson darted at him glances of anger.

"There," cried Archie, still blubbering, "there's my box!"

Rawson advanced, and though much smaller than Marshall, boldly snatched the box out of his hands. Then he opened it.

"Nearly half gone!" he cried; and then, overcome with disgust, he sputtered: "Oh, you bully! Oh, you sneak!" Words failed him.

Marshall made no response, and then Jim, neither angry nor excited, advanced and shook his finger warningly in his face. "Now, Marshall," he said, "this is the last time; do you understand? One more, and I'll tell Mr. Dean, and then you'll leave the camp. But you won't go without a good licking from me. And, Chester, I am disappointed in you. I did n't expect this from you."

Marshall stood without a word, and Tommy crouched in abasement, while Jim turned and walked away, with Archie following, clutching his box. Chester stared at Marshall, amazed, and then at Rawson, who, yet lingering, looked at the three with a face in which there shone a gleam of hope.

"Marshall!" cried Chester, as an idea struggled for lodgment in his mind. "Rawson!"

"Did n't you know?" cried Rawson, eagerly.

"What?" asked Chester.

"Why, that Marshall took those marshmallows from Archie, while Tommy held him."

"You liar!" cried Marshall, furiously. Springing forward, he stood over the little boy, his hand upraised.

Rawson gave way not a step. "Don't touch me, Marshall!" he cried; and in his tense figure and shaking voice there was a threat which the bigger boy could not disregard. But while Marshall stood hesitating, Chester advanced, and catching him by the arm, turned him about and looked into his face.

"Did you take them, Marshall?" he asked.

"No," said Marshall, loudly; "I—"

But Chester interrupted him, for on Marshall's face the truth was not to be concealed.

"Oh, Marshall," he cried, "you did!" And in that cry were disappointment and reproach in such measure that Marshall stood speechless, without defense.

Chester turned from him quickly, and struck his hands together. "And the boys thought I knew of it!" he said aloud. Then suddenly he darted into the path that led from the spot, and ran hastily on the footsteps of Jim and Archie. Rawson followed. In Chester's mind everything was confused, and he could distinguish but one thing clearly: that his good name was at stake,

and he must set himself right before the other boys. Did every one in the camp think him a thief? With catching breath, stumbling, he reached at last the cleared ground near the shanties, where stood a group of boys, and among them Jim and George. To Jim ran Chester directly.

"Oh, Jim," he cried, panting, "I did n't do it! I did n't know anything about it!"

For a moment his statement was received in silence. "Well," said Jim, at last, "all right!" But there was such coldness in his tone that Chester's heart sank. They could not disbelieve him, such sincerity was in his face and words; yet what was against him in the minds of each of the two older boys was the thought that it was mean of him to clear himself of this one scrape, when, in fact, he had been guilty in other ones, equally bad. For both George and Jim, being the ones to whom all complaints were made, knew of cases of the loss of candy, or of other boyish perishable treasures which had fallen into the hands of Marshall, sometimes by force, sometimes by stealth, and believed firmly that Chester had been a willing sharer in the spoil.

He stood in silence before this prejudiced tribu-

nal, knowing that something was wrong. He longed to cry out to George and Jim, "Oh, don't turn me away! Let me be one of you!" Perhaps if he had, his later troubles would have vanished. But he had never so humbled himself to any one, and besides, other boys stood around staring, and he feared lest they should misunderstand him. And while he stood uncertain, the big boys turned away. "All right, Chester," they said, even though their voices expressed that it was not all right. "Come, boys." And the group moved away and left him standing alone with Rawson.

"Oh, Rawson," he said unhappily, "no one will have anything to do with me!"

"Never mind," said Rawson, sturdily; "I 'll stand by you!"

Just then Marshall appeared, coming cautiously down the path. He hesitated when he saw Rawson, but then advanced and spoke to Chester as if in explanation. "See here, Chester," he said; "I want to tell you—"

But Chester turned on him in anger. At that moment it seemed to him as if all his troubles came from Marshall alone. "Don't speak to me," he cried. "You—you robber!"

Marshall threw up his head and tossed his curls

back haughtily. "Oh, well," he said, with a sneer on his handsome mouth, "you think yourself mighty fine. But we'll see! I'll have something to tell the boys about you," he said, as he turned away, "that will amuse them. About your swimming Terror, and winning the Junior Cup." And he laughed as he disappeared in the bushes.

"What did he mean, Chester?" asked Rawson. "Did you tell him that you were going to swim Terror and win the Junior Cup?"

"No," answered Chester, uncomfortably; "but I said I wished to."

"Well, you did make a mistake!" said Rawson, decidedly.

"I know I did," said Chester, humbly. But then, seeing that the Rat had more to say, he asked: "What do you mean?"

"Because," said Rawson, "Marshall means to win the Cup himself. He is a first-rate athlete, and he nearly won it last year."

Chester felt himself a fool, but he felt the worse the very next day. He began to hear meaning questions when he was about. "Are you swimming Terror this morning?" one boy would ask another. Or another would shout clear across the ball-field, to be answered with titters, "Have you

got your eye on the Junior Cup?" And Chester's cheeks and forehead burned at each fling. His measure of bitterness was full: he was an object of ridicule to the boys.

CHAPTER IV



ON the third day after his break with Marshall there came to Chester the realization of his position in the camp. He found himself between two opposed sides, one of which, as it seemed to his sensitive fancy, rejected him, and one which he himself rejected. He wandered about alone. To add to his misfortunes, Mr. Holmes had taken the Rat with him on an errand to the neighboring town, and so Chester was deprived all day long of the presence in camp of the two persons who alone could give him comfort. In the morning at the lake, in the afternoon at the ball-field, though he played and swam with the rest, he spoke to few, and few to him. He was pleased for a half-hour with the society of some of the little boys, who even in two days had learned to like him because he was kind to them; and he was kind to them because he needed their kind-

ness in return. But they left him to follow Jim Pierce, who was their old friend, and who, besides, could cause marvelous disappearances of a half-dollar. It was a lonely day; Chester wanted to go to Mr. Dean and ask to be sent home.

Toward evening Mr. Holmes returned with Rawson, and it relieved Chester to see their friendly faces once more in camp. But more than that: he found that they brought with them the promise of occupation and interest. They had gone to make certain preparations for a forthcoming excursion, a trip up the neighboring mountain, visible from the camp. The announcement of this was made by Mr. Holmes at supper. He described the trip, which was to take a day and a night, and on which only the strongest would be allowed to go; explained what they should have to carry; told how they would see the sunset from the summit, and spend the night in a shelter a little way from the top; said that with red fire signals would be exchanged between the boys in the camp and those on the mountain; and finally finished his speech by calling for volunteers.

There was a rush at him of twenty boys, each shouting "I!" Chester hesitated for a moment, but his desire to go was too great, and in a mo-

ment he joined the rest. From the crowd that surrounded him, Mr. Holmes sent first one boy regretfully away, and then another, until there were but eleven that remained. Mr. Holmes himself would make a twelfth. The boys were the strongest and most active in camp, all except one, who stood and looked on as if he had no interest in going.

"Marshall," asked Mr. Holmes, "are you not going with us?"

"No, sir," answered the boy.

"We should be glad to have you come, my boy," said the master, kindly.

"I have something else to do, sir," he replied.

In the morning at eleven the party started, and were accompanied for a mile by the smaller boys. These turning back at last, the adventurers were left to themselves. They walked with steady step, as Mr. Holmes gave them the example; they were fresh and elastic, active and merry; they laughed and told jokes among themselves. Chester was cheerful from the example of the others, who showed no unwillingness to have him among them. The weight of his pack seemed nothing at all. Rawson trudged sturdily at his side, and was full of merriment. The day was bright and clear,

and not hot; it seemed as if everything were to be successful.

They reached at two o'clock the entrance to the mountain trail. It was barely an opening in the bushes. At the side of the road there gushed a little spring whose water was led to a drinking-trough farther down the road. "Here we will stop, boys," said Mr. Holmes, "and eat our lunch."

They stopped and ate with relish. Their appetite was the greater that the fare was simple and they were the hungrier for their walk. Bread and cheese, sandwiches of butter or meat, disappeared rapidly. Like the rest, Chester disposed of his food with eager appetite. But he was fairly stuck at the end, when he came to a very crusty piece of bread, off which his teeth slipped. And yet that piece of bread, which ordinarily no one would offer and no one accept, seemed to him just then a proper finish to his lunch. The others were getting ready to move; his knife he had left at camp, and he did not know what to do.

Jim Pierce observed his dilemma. "Here, Chester," he said, "use this"; and he handed the boy his large clasp-knife, a valuable one of English make. "Bring it along when you come," added

Jim, and he prepared to start up the trail. He left Chester pleased at the kindness.

One by one the boys disappeared in the bushes, until Chester was left alone, eating. He finished his last mouthful of bread, shut the knife, and stooped for a drink at the spring, laying down the knife as he did so. Then he rose and put on his pack, and paused for a moment, looking down at the spot where he had been sitting. Was there not something that he should carry in his hand? No, he saw nothing, and so turned to the bushes and entered upon the trail. The knife lay unnoticed by the spring.

He soon caught up with the others, and followed along at the rear of the line. For half an hour the company wound in single file among trees fit to make masts for the finest ships. In admiration Chester gazed at their straight boles and lofty tops. The ascent was gradual; they were but reaching the mountain proper. At length Mr. Holmes called a halt.

"Five minutes to take breath," he said. "Now the climb begins. For two hours, boys, we shall have hard scrabbling." With what they had done and what they had yet to do, they were willing to rest, and sat mostly silent, taking breath. Then

they rose to continue their journey, and once more put over their heads their rolled blankets. Amid the stir, Jim Pierce approached Chester and asked him for his knife.

"Oh, Jim," cried the boy, in agony, as he suddenly realized what he had done, "I left it at the spring!"

They stood for a moment without speaking. Any other boy but Jim might have covered Chester with reproaches, but Jim was accustomed never to speak without thinking. His silence was to Chester more dreadful than blame; he looked into the face of the big boy, not knowing what to expect.

"Well," said Jim at last, "perhaps we 'll find it in the morning."

"I 'll go for it now," said Chester. He laid his pack down.

"You can't," said Jim; "it 's a mile behind, and you would only delay us so that we should lose the sunset. We must go on."

"Oh, Jim," cried Chester, "I am so sorry!"

Jim turned away. He felt keenly the loss of the knife, for he was sure that he should never see it again. He was sharply disappointed, yet he managed to say, as he took his place behind Mr.

Holmes and George Tenney at the head of the line, "Never mind, but come along, Chester."

That Jim was so kind made Chester's fault seem the greater. For the second time he saw the last boy disappear from his sight, as he stood thinking. He was overwhelmed at the result of his own carelessness, for the thought in his mind was: "Now Jim will never like me at all!" He thought of buying another knife, but his pocket-money would never buy a knife so fine. He thought of the knife lying at the edge of the spring for the first comer to take, and the thought was too much. He left his pack lying where it was, and saying to himself: "They will not miss me; I will catch them at the summit, and it does not matter if I am late," he turned and ran down the path.

In half an hour he was back, panting but triumphant, for the knife was in his pocket. Now he picked up his pack and slung it over his shoulder, and hurried on the steps of the party. The sun seemed yet high; the bright rays streamed through the trees; the sky was blue above. The path grew steep, but Chester climbed it in eager haste, and for nearly an hour toiled unresting. But what does a city boy know of the signs of the woods? At the end of that time he struck into the wrong path.

He did not know that the path branched, there at the foot of a great boulder. He followed around the stone to the right, while to the left the true path led, with the footprints of all his companions scarce showing on the dry, firm moss, and not noticed by his hurrying glance. He hastened along the new path with undiminished speed. Mr. Holmes, or one of the older boys, would not have followed it one hundred feet without turning back. The cobwebs that caught across his face, the path itself, untracked by feet since the last rain, would have spoken at once to the senses of an experienced woodsman. But Chester was none such.

Yet when at last he hesitated and looked for footprints in the path, footprints were there! It seemed to him for a moment that those were not like the marks of boots, even though in gravel that would take no certain print, and that it was strange that a party of eleven should make so few. But the thought took no hold upon his mind. Ah, had he known upon whose trail he was hurrying so confidently!

The boys, he calculated, could not be far ahead of him now, he had come so fast. The thought encouraged him, and in spite of legs that began to feel the strain, he went unflagging. The path led

ever upward, yet was not steep, going now along a gentle incline, now up a quick ascent, now along the hillside on the level. Still the footprints kept the path ahead of him, and a glance at the freshly disturbed gravel reassured him each time that the thought came to him: "If I should lose the path!" As yet on his eager pursuit the loneliness of the wilderness had no alarm for him. And so, shifting his pack to relieve one tired shoulder, he still pushed on. But at last he paused, as a sudden shadow seemed to dim the day. He looked up. Bright blue was still the cloudless sky overhead, and the sun was lingering upon the trees; but it only reached their tops, and the shadows fell very obliquely. Chester saw with sudden dismay that the evening was close at hand.

Silently passes the day in the woods, while each incident serves but to make its passage seem the longer. Silently comes the evening, but it hurries, and no hurry of our own will help us to forestall it. In ten minutes more Chester saw that the sun had left the tops of the trees. Still he hurried on.

"The others will see the sunset," he thought. "They have not waited for me, and must be at the summit now." So, pushing onward in the path, yet now beginning to slacken speed, he passed

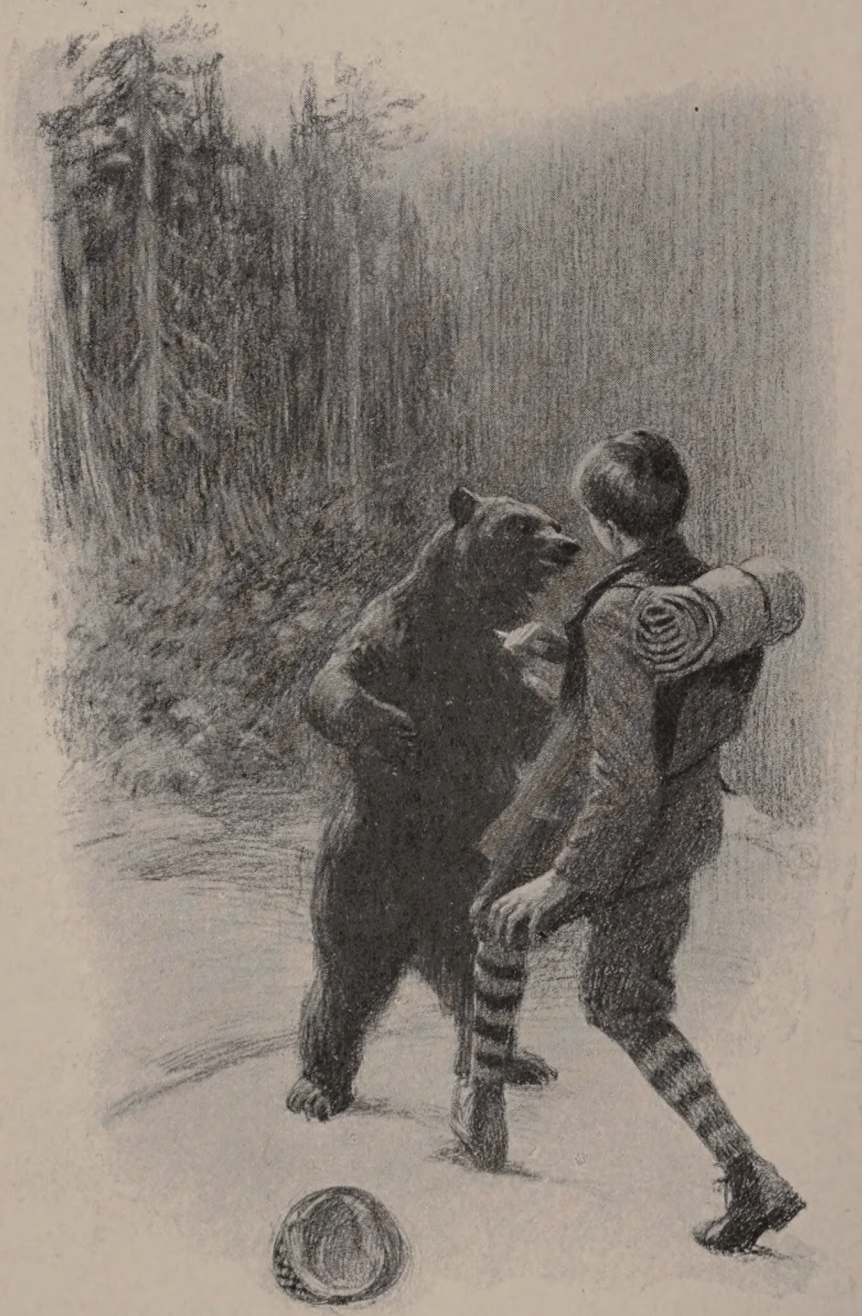
another hour of earnest climbing. By that time he saw that the sun had left the heavens. "I must be there soon," he said. He looked ever upward through the trees, hoping to catch a glimpse of the mountain-top above him. At last the trees were thinner in one spot, to which the path led. He saw that there was a look-off, and hurried toward it. He found himself suddenly on a broad shelf of mossy rock, the brink of a precipice. Below him was a magnificent ravine, mysterious in the gathering dusk; across it rose a mountain-peak in majesty. Chester looked at it in terror. He knew its aspect well. That was the peak which he had meant to climb. He was lost!

His low cry of dismay was answered by a sound from behind. Something was moving in the bushes. He drew back from them in alarm, and stood a few feet away, his back to the precipice. Instinctively he thought of his only weapon, the knife, and he drew it out and opened it as a stick cracked near him. Then the bushes moved to right and left in front of him, and a great black head and shoulders, with eyes of jet, and long snout, all in glossy black fur, pushed out from the green leaves. A bear! Chester stepped back as far as he dared. The black nose wrinkled at him

inquiringly; the little shiny eyes were fastened upon his; the bear did not know what he was. It came wholly out from the bushes and pushed up to him, an enormous creature, smelling of pine-needles and the soft mold of the woods. Its shoulders were as high as Chester's own, and it thrust its muzzle, snuffing, into Chester's face.

Better bear than precipice! Behind the boy was a fall of two hundred feet, and certain death. He stood straight for a moment, not daring to move; but then he thought of his father, and that a boy should be brave. In anger at the head so close to his own, he raised the knife and struck. There was a sudden snort and smothered yelp; the bear turned with a rush and plunged into the bushes; there was a single crash of breaking branches, and all was silence.

How was Chester to know—he knew so little of the woods—that a frightened bear goes as invisible as the breeze, and as silent? To him it seemed that the bear had stopped just beyond the screen of bushes. In a moment it would come back; and then—! He stood gripping the knife, conscious of the great valley at his back, straining his eyes at the bushes in front of him. Three, five minutes passed in quiet.



"HE RAISED THE KNIFE AND STRUCK."

Then a cry which echoed through the woods, so that a faint reply came from the mountain-side beyond, came to Chester's ear. But it was distant, and his thoughts were on the present and the very near. It came closer, and still he did not notice it. Then silence, and suddenly, from close at hand, he heard: "Chester! Oh, Chester!"

"Here!" answered he, in sudden joy, with all his strength.

"Where?"

"Here!" he answered. "But keep away. The bear!"

There was a rushing of feet, and Mr. Holmes, followed by others, burst through the bushes on him. But catching the boy's last words, and seeing him standing with the knife in his hand, the master quickly took from his pocket a revolver, and approached the bushes at the spot where Chester pointed. He showed no fear, but said, "There will be no bear here, my boy."

"Give me the knife, Chester," said Jim, and took it, and with George Tenney, who had the ax, following the master they entered the bushes. But there was no bear, nor a sign nor a trace, and the three, whom Chester had followed, though trembling, came back to the rock at the edge of

the precipice. Willing to keep together, with occasional glances over their shoulders, the remaining boys gathered around them in a close group.

"Are you sure that there was a bear?" asked Mr. Holmes, putting his revolver away. "Did you see him, Chester?"

"I saw him," answered Chester, "and I felt his wet nose. He breathed in my face. Look at the point of the knife."

Jim displayed the blade, and on the point was blood.

"I could not get away," said Chester, in explanation, and he pointed to the gulf. But suddenly, as the memory of his lonely climb and his danger rushed over him, he turned to Mr. Holmes with tears in his eyes, and cried, "I am glad you have come!"

"I am glad, too," said the master, kindly, "and that you are not hurt. But my dear boy," and he put his hands on Chester's shoulders and looked him in the face, "why did you lead us such a chase?"

Chester dropped his head, for his fault was plain to him. He had spoiled the climb for all the boys; he had spoiled the trip, by his carelessness first,

then by his wilfulness. He did not know what to say, and looked at the ground.

"You know, Chester," said Mr. Holmes's grave voice, "that you ought to have obeyed Jim, especially as it was his knife and he was willing to lose it. What will you say to all the boys who have lost their climb?"

"I don't know," said Chester, stupidly. It was true: he ought to have obeyed Jim.

"We discovered that you were not with us, and Jim said that you must have gone back. We waited for nearly an hour, and then I thought that you must have taken this path, which leads only here, to this view. So we had to follow you. What will you say, Chester?" asked Mr. Holmes.

Tears stood in Chester's eyes. Would he always bungle, even when he meant well? "I am very sorry," he said.

"Well," said Mr. Holmes, kindly, "nothing can be done now. It is already evening. Come, boys," he said, as he turned away, "let us clear off this place and make it fit for our camp. We can sleep on the moss, and cut wood for a fire."

The boys began at once, and Chester, inspired with the one idea of being helpful and submissive, worked harder than the rest. Rubbish was

cleaned from the broad rock; wood was cut and carried; blankets were unrolled and spread out, ready for sleep; food was laid out for supper. As the dusk increased, the crackle of dry twigs was heard, and then, as if to greet their fire, the moon rose over a ridge, and lighted up their camping-place, the mountain-side beyond, and the valley below. Mr. Holmes at last called all to supper.

The evening was not cold, but the fire was cheerful. The boys gathered around it, and it comforted Chester, who placed himself on the outside of the ring, that the Rat came and sat close beside him. They ate for a while in silence, being tired; but then the food quickened their spirits, and they began to talk. Some one asked Chester about the bear, and the boy, glad though he would have been to remain unnoticed, was required to tell the whole story.

Mr. Holmes was willing to turn the boys' minds from the subject of bears. "How bright the moonlight is!" said he, when Chester finished. "See, boys, how clear everything is across the ravine."

They turned and looked. It was a wonderful scene. Except below, where the bottom of the gorge was still in shadow, the whole place was



"THE BOYS GATHERED AROUND THE FIRE."

lighted up by the moon. It was a thousand feet across the ravine, yet each pine-top, symmetrical and sharp, was clear in the moonlight. There were thousands, millions of them, planted thickly, growing out of the deep darkness hundreds of feet below, climbing up, up, along the sides of the mountain, clothing it thickly, forming a forest so great that one hesitated to guess the number of trees. Thousands of acres of fine forest-land were visible on the broad side of the old mountain, yet in the bright light every tree was discernible, its fine, sharp point clear against the shadow it cast.

Out of the great forest where not a human soul wandered, where, except for pleasure-seekers like themselves, not a human being would come in months, rose the blunt mountain-peak. Far above the boys the trees grew smaller, then scrubby, and above the scrub showed the bare stone ridges of the rain-washed summit. The moonlight silvered the top, and cast its heavy shadows into crevices. How fine if they were there! and one boy sighed at the thought. And below the summit a considerable distance, yet not among the trees, a tiny building showed itself, with its shadow on the rocks behind it. "See," said George Tenney; "there is the shelter." And

all, for a moment, strained their eyes to see the little house.

Suddenly, as they looked, came an exclamation from Mr. Holmes, so startling that they turned to him in amazement. He had risen to his feet and was pointing. "See, see!" he cried. "The shelter!"

They looked again, half frightened at the meaning in his voice. Above them the shelter still stood in the calm moonlight. What could be the matter?

"Boys," cried Mr. Holmes, in the same alarming tones, "the shelter is moving!"

CHAPTER V



THE boys all started to their feet at the cry, and, motionless, strained their eyes across the moonlit valley. The shelter moving? It seemed secure as the mountain whereon it rested. Some of the boys looked to Mr. Holmes for an explanation of his assertion. But still he gazed, pointing, and as they turned to look again, a sound like the first faint breath of a storm was wafted to them across the ravine. Still there the little house remained, visible clearly on the distant ridge. Yet—what? was it indeed so? The bare summit still glistened in the moonlight, secure in its altitude as the bottom of the sea; but the mountain-side that seemed so firm, the shelter, the scrub about it, the taller trees below, yes, thousands of them—were they not moving?

Now came the sound louder and clearer, like the smothered grinding of rock upon rock; and

a swaying began in the moving trees, as if they knew their doom, and leaning each to each, whispered, "Sisters, good-by!" The sound of the trees came to the listening ears. And more and more apparent, though they could not see where it began nor where it ended, the movement, a slipping downward, was visible to those watching across the valley. Some trees were still; others close to them were moving, and a great patch of the mountain-side had begun its descent. The shelter moved down after the trees, and a large piece of bare ground close to the summit itself, with its great stones still in their relative positions, was following the shelter. The line of separation, a strip showing the fresh, moist gravel, shining in the moonlight, at last began to spread across the head of the moving section, and to run down both sides, forming a semicircle. Then suddenly it began to broaden with great rapidity, and the sound of the whispering trees, the grinding rocks, rose on the instant to a roar.

Slowly the landslide had begun, but quickly it ended. With the rush and the roar of a thousand cataracts it swept down into the valley. Hundreds of acres, loosed from their foundations, trees, dirt, and stones in fearful career, plowed

their way through the opposing forest. Nothing could withstand the impetus. The trees were planed like splinters from a board, while, crashing, the mass passed over the spot where they had stood. Trees were hurled like sticks, boulders smote upon each other and broke, and giant pines and spruce, caught in the mill of stones, were crushed to pulp and ground into the dirt. A din arose in the ravine commensurate with the destruction, and the roar of the landslide, rising from the narrow place, told to the other mountains, miles away, the loss and the pain of one. Quickly it was over. While the boys stood rooted, half stunned by the dreadful sight and the fearful noise, the whole vast mass of destruction lodged in the bottom of the valley. Boulders and heavy trees still for a minute came crashing down the slide; the sound for a minute still roared in the narrow place, as if from its heart the mountain was crying for its hurt. But then the uproar ceased.

Then they could hear the clamor of thousands of birds, which, roused from their resting-places, flew out into the night. Some, indeed, had saved themselves from the trees which were destroyed. The little birds settled themselves soon. The

larger, hawks and crows and one great eagle, flew high and disappeared over the ridges that shut in the valley, and they screamed, discordant, as they went. Owls remained, great birds that circled about as if to examine into the cause of the disturbance.

A great scar remained above on the mountain-side. Rocks and ledges lay bare to the pitying glance of the kindly moon. For fifty years only bushes would grow there, and the jealous rains would fight with the rocks to sweep away each bit of earth that might nourish a seed or give life to a plant. In a century trees would come and cover over the raw wound on the grand old peak; but long the bones of the mountain would show through the gash, washed by each rain, beaten by the hot sun, covered over mercifully only by the snow in winter. And down below lay the trees that had been, tumbled and broken. The mountain had been proud of them; men had come among them to admire and wonder at them: and now, instead of honorably yielding to the ax for an honorable use, or of living to the end of a tree's majestic life, cut off in their pride, shattered, twisted, they lay buried amid rocks and stones.

The boys stood in silence while the sounds died

away, while the clamor of the birds was stilled, while the last voices of animals in the mysterious forest ceased to cry. Only they and the circling owls looked down on the valley of destruction, on that death of millions of trees, on that annihilation of the work, through centuries, of the friendliest forces of nature.

Mr. Holmes was the first to move. He turned and sought Chester, and drew him to his side. "My dear boy," he said, and all heard him, "who was I to reproach you, when the hand of Providence was in your action? But for you we should all lie there below, under a thousand tons of rock!"

The boys shook themselves free from the spell of the dreadful sight. "It is true," they cried, crowding around. "But for Chester we should have been in the shelter, and should have been killed!"

Some came to Chester, and laughing nervously, insisted on shaking his hand and thanking him for saving their lives. Others looked down again at the bottom of the ravine, where the moon, as it rose higher, showed the great heap of ruin. Mr. Holmes called them all to him at last. "It is late," he said, "and we must start with the earliest light. They have been watching from the camp

for the light of our fire, and perhaps they have seen and heard the landslide. In the morning Mr. Dean, with his spy-glass, will be able even to see that the shelter has been destroyed. We must hurry back to let him know that we are safe. So to bed now, boys, and rest for to-morrow's walk!"

Chester's sleep was broken: he dreamed of bears and landslides, and fancied himself walking for hours alone along a mountain-side. He waked in the morning at the first light. Voices were whispering near him, and rising on his elbow, he saw George Tenney and Jim Pierce just taking leave of Mr. Holmes. "They are going," he said to himself, "to take the news to the camp that we are safe." Sleep was over for him, and rising, he helped Mr. Holmes to light the fire. Familiar with the mountain, Mr. Holmes led the way to a spring, and in the pail which they had brought with them they made coffee for the rest of the boys, who, waking one by one, rose with yawns and stood about, sleepily watching, or looked at the landslide and wondered at it. All ate breakfast standing.

In the morning light the destruction of the evening before was painfully visible. The terrible space above, bare to the living rock; the clean-

swept path next beneath, where the mass had passed; the piled wreckage in the valley below, where roots of trees, and dirt, and giant boulders lay mixed with one another—all these were clear to the eye of day with shuddering certainty. The boys looked with wonder—no, more, with awe and gratitude—down upon that ruin, and thought how easily it might have happened to them to lie buried in that enormous sepulcher. They were kind, therefore, to Chester: gave him the best of the breakfast, spoke to him of his bear, and told, so that he should hear, how glad they were that he had missed the path.

A few hours of walking put the boys again in camp, welcomed and wondered at by their relieved companions. For as they sat at the edge of the hill that overlooked the lake, and watched for the red light that was to be the signal, the boys in camp had seen, on the moonlit mountain, the dark forest swept away to show the bright gravel and the glistening rocks, and had heard the mighty noise of the slide. Comforting themselves as best they could with the idea that since the others had not signaled, perhaps they were not on that part of the mountain at all, they had waited till the morning, when the advent of the two big boys

removed all doubt from their minds. The boys were received with acclamation, none more than Chester, whose adventure with the bear, and whose providential mistake that rescued the whole party, called upon him special honor.

But a new spirit had come over the boy, infused into him in some way by these last experiences. He put aside, as well as he could, any credit for either bear or rescue. For his mind was set, now, by the events of the summer. His first rebellion, when they wished to duck him, his great mistake in choosing Marshall for a companion, the suspicion that had been cast upon him and that seemed not yet to be removed, and finally the kind yet resolute words of Mr. Holmes, blaming him for his actions—these neither the applause of the boys nor his own weaker nature could thrust out of his memory. His better part seized and held to them like bitter medicine that yet might do him good. He was resolved not to comfort himself with any undeserved credit, and he determined never again to make the mistakes that would cut him off from his hope of an honorable position in the camp. And so his thinking mind, which Mr. Holmes had the wisdom to trust, was working its way from darkness to light.

The words of Mr. Holmes, the next morning, showed Chester how he could redeem himself in his own eyes, and turned what had been only a vague desire into a real and vigorous purpose.

"I wish to remind the boys," said Mr. Holmes, as he rose in his place at the breakfast-table, "that it is time to commence training for the prize cups. As most of you know, there is one water event for the Cup, the mile swim, which may be accomplished at any time before the day of the sports, provided that a proper timer goes in the boat. I am pleased to announce," he observed parenthetically, "that Marshall Moore made the mile swim yesterday, with Mr. Dean as timekeeper, in forty-five minutes and twenty seconds, which is one of the best records ever made by one of the Junior Class. And there are six land events," Mr. Holmes resumed, amid the meaning glances of some of the boys, "the two dashes, the two jumps, the hurdle race, and putting the shot. We shall begin to-day to put the track in order, and I advise you all to begin training to-morrow."

Chester heard without dismay the news of the performance of his rival. But he heard with disappointment the announcement that, on account of many things which would keep him busy, Mr.

Holmes would not be able to train the boys himself. George Tenney and Jim Pierce, Mr. Holmes said, would be glad to assist any boy that came to them for help; but Chester could not think of asking them to help him. It seemed to him, therefore, at that very moment, that the Cup was lost to him; but with a tenacity of purpose which he inherited from his father, he said to himself: "I will yet try!" And, to begin with, he resolved to help at the work of putting the track in order.

Much comfort did he take that morning in the society of the Rat, who joined him in the work, and for two hours helped him push the roller around and around the oval track. Then George and Jim, who had been marking and measuring, supervising and directing, ordered the two boys to the lake for their swim, and gave the roller into the hands of two others.

Chester was pleased at even so much notice from the big boys, and Rawson was proud. "Did you see," he asked, "that they saw we were doing good work? They are not so much down on you as you imagine. They'll tell you how to train if only you ask them."

"Not yet, at least," answered Chester.

"Oh, Chester, you must beat Marshall!" cried the little fellow, eagerly.



CHESTER AND RAWSON AT WORK ON THE RUNNING TRACK.

"I 'll try," replied Chester.

He worked steadily at his swimming, his running, and his jumping, for a week. At the end of that time he accomplished the Island swim, with Mr. Holmes—who came to the lake whenever he could—in the boat that accompanied him. As he gained staying power in the water, so also he gained it on the land, and found that each day he could run a farther distance on the track, or a shorter distance at greater speed than before. In the impromptu contests that were got up day after day, he measured himself with one after another of the Juniors, and found that his perseverance was winning, and that he was sure in the end of beating them all—all except Marshall, whose splendid build and excellent development, and whose advantage in age, seemed almost to put him beyond competition. Though he and Chester never ran together, but always avoided each other, he beat with seeming ease the boys that Chester could beat with difficulty. Especially in those events where skill counted more than strength, in the hurdles and in the jumps, he seemed unapproachable. As day followed day, and Chester watched the boy whom he felt to be his only rival, he repeated to himself more and more often that Marshall would win the Cup.

Not Chester alone, but another boy also, was troubled with the same thought. The little Rat, whose sturdy frame fitted him for all feats of endurance, yet not for agility nor speed, watched with a critical eye Chester's efforts at self-instruction. "He does n't do it right," he muttered to himself, as he watched his friend, with lumbering gait, leaping the hurdles. And again, "He does n't do it right," he would say to himself, as he watched Chester trying to hurl himself over the bar. His own acquaintance with athletics, on account of his school life, was intimate, and he distinguished at a glance Chester's clumsy efforts from the easy performance of Marshall. Cool-headed and shrewd, he comforted himself with no vain hopes, but said to himself with increasing assurance, "Marshall will win the Cup."

Yet there was no question that Chester would be second in the struggle, and perhaps would make a close second after all, if he could only be taught. Rawson himself could not instruct in what he could not do; he had not yet trained his eye to distinguish minor faults, for he was only a little boy, and could not say to Chester, "In this you are wrong; do it this other way." Instead, he realized with disquiet that his friend, for all his endeavors,

was only confirming himself in certain faults that would insure his defeat.

Only one thing could save him, and Rawson decided to make an effort for it. "See here, Chester," he said, one day, "come out rowing with me."

Chester looked at his little friend affectionately. "But this is no day for a row," he objected; "it is too windy."

"Oh, yes, it's good enough," said Rawson. "It's only flawy; there are no high waves."

So since they had both swum to the Island, and could use a boat without asking permission, they took one at the boat-house, and rowed out into the middle of the lake. There Rawson rested on his oars, and looked at Chester.

"I want to talk to you," he said.

"I know you do," said Chester. "That's what you brought me out here for. So go ahead."

"Well," said the Rat, and then he paused for words. At last he blurted out, "Chester, how are you going to win the Junior Cup?"

"I don't know!" said Chester, and immediately became gloomy. He sat for some time without further words; but then at last he said: "I know very well that my chance is mighty small, when I look at Marshall going over the hurdles or clearing

the bar, and then compare myself with him. I think I could push him hard in the hundred yards or the quarter-mile, but in those other things, in the hurdles and the jumps, I am just absolutely useless, and I have no chance. It 's awfully good of you, Rawson," and he reached out and touched the other's knee, "to bother about me. But it 's no use; and though I'm not going to give up trying, I know it 's no use. I 'll just get beaten and laughed at, and I suppose it 'll do me good."

"No one is going to laugh at you," said Rawson. "But Chester," he added, with hesitation, "there is one way that perhaps will help."

"What is that?"

"You can ask the big boys to train you."

There was silence in the boat, while Rawson, as the wind drifted them nearer the shore, took the oars again and pulled for a while. Then he added, "There they are now—over there."

Chester looked, and saw the one sailboat of the camp, a large yacht tender in which a sail could be stepped, sailing near the distant shore.

"Well," he said, after a while, "I know that way. But I have given those fellows enough trouble this summer. And they have never really

forgiven me because I went with Marshall, even though I do not go with him any more."

"I know," said Rawson, who yet did not know of the suspicion that still rested upon Chester; "and that 's funny to me, for it is not like them. They are nicer fellows than you think, Chester."

"I know they 're nice," said Chester, "and I know that I was very foolish when I first came to camp. I know lots of things now that I did n't a month ago. And I know this," he added gloomily: "that when once you 've made mistakes, it takes a mighty long time to make up for them, so that you often get tired trying."

"Don't get tired of it, Chester," begged Rawson, earnestly.

"Well, I 'm not yet," said Chester. And again there was silence in the boat, except for the slapping of the waves, as each boy sat busy with his own thoughts. At last Rawson spoke again.

"Now, Chester," he asked, "won't you really ask the big boys to help you? I wish you would."

Chester did not answer at once, but sat studying the boards in the bottom.

"See," said Rawson, suddenly; "here they are."

Chester looked up, as the larger boat, with its big white sail, came cutting the water near them.

Jim and George sat in her, well to windward, hatless, flushed, and happy. "Hullo, Rawson! Hullo, Chester!" they hailed. "Hullo!" "Hullo!" answered the two boys. They passed within forty feet and rushed by.

"See," said Rawson, his eyes still following the boat, "how friendly they are. Won't you ask them, Chester?"

But while Chester still hesitated, the voice of the other changed to a cry of horror. "Oh!" he cried. "The mast!"

And as Chester tried to turn in his seat he heard, borne freshly on the wind, the sound of rending wood.

CHAPTER VI



TURNING quickly, Chester saw that at a little distance, fortunately still very close, the mast and sail were collapsing upon the two boys in the other boat. The mast fell with force, but the sail, inflated, fell more slowly. The boat was on the point of capsizing. It was enough to see; he turned to Rawson, and cried: "Row!"

But the Rat was already hard at work, trying to turn the boat around. Chester helped him, pushing as the other pulled, and the boat immediately gathered headway, and being light, fairly flew. The thought came to Chester that both George and Jim were good swimmers, but then he cried to himself: "If either has been struck by the mast or caught in the ropes!" And that was exactly what had happened.

For when they were at the side of the upturned boat, Jim Pierce only was in sight, and he, with blood flowing down his forehead, half stunned,

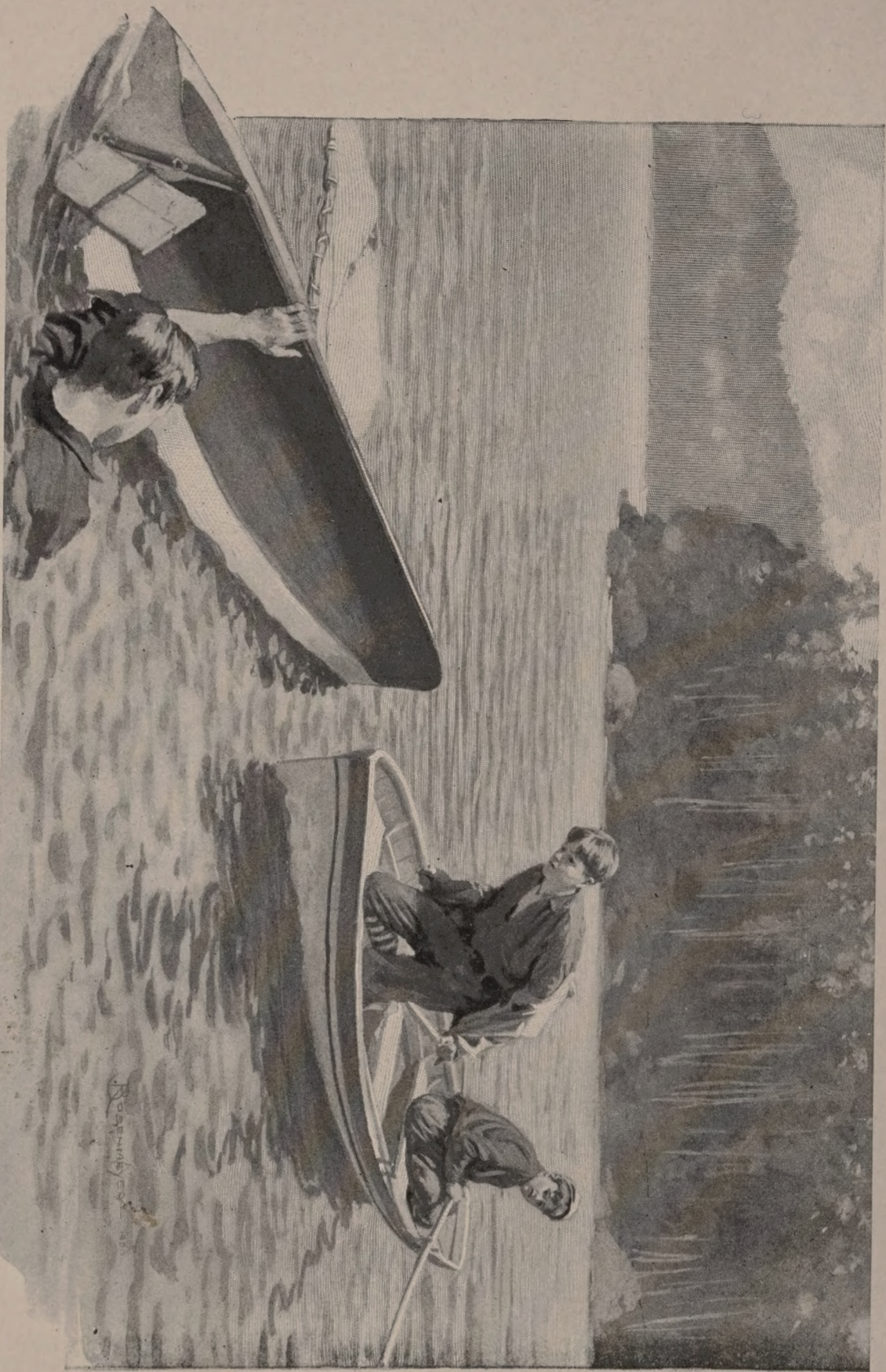
was feebly holding on to the boat. The boat itself was upside down, the sail floated wide, and there was no sign of George.

"He is underneath the boat," cried Rawson, in terror.

"I will go after him," cried Chester; "you 'tend to Jim." And he prepared to dive. But one thought came to him before he went over the side—that perhaps only by cutting could he set George free; for that he was entangled Chester saw was very likely. So with haste he snatched his jack-knife from his pocket, opened it, and with it in his hand leaped from the boat, his heels high behind him.

It was a clumsy dive in his haste; he felt the water force his arms aside and strike his face so that it smarted. But it was good enough; immediately he was under the boat, and his hands, as he groped about, touched George's foot. At once he began to feel upward along the legs and body for the ropes entangling him. He found a perfect net of lines across the big boy's body. In the dull light he could see little, for the dome of the boat cut off all direct light, and the other boat and the extended sail combined to cut off reflection. So he worked in the dark, and hacked des-

“THE BOAT ITSELF WAS UPSIDE DOWN, THE SAIL FLOATED WIDE, AND THERE WAS NO SIGN OF GEORGE.”



perately at the ropes, with knife that was all too dull. But one gave way, and then another, and then a third, and as his head and lungs began to feel like bursting, he felt that George had moved his arm as if it were at last freed. But yet George did not move from his position among the thwarts; it was evident that he was still caught.

With despairing strength Chester reached upward, found one more rope, and cut it through. It parted, and he felt with joy that the big boy was beginning to struggle. As he himself pushed downward to clear the gunwale, he saw the outline of George's whole body against the green water. In another moment both were at the surface, gasping in the fresh air, and above them was the other boat, with Rawson in it, reaching over to catch Chester by the collar.

"Oh, I'm all right," gurgled Chester, avoiding; "help George."

"I'm all right," answered George, as he breathed deeply; "where's Jim?"

"Here, in the bottom of my boat," said Rawson.

"I'll get in over the bow," said George, as he seized the boat. "You take the stern, Chester." Together they clambered into the boat. There

lay Jim, his head upon one of the seats, bloody, dripping, and exhausted, but conscious. He looked at the two as they climbed in, turning his eyes from one to the other.

"I 'm all right," he said; "and you 're not drowned?"

Then Chester, still panting violently, saw that George was scarcely more out of breath than himself.

"Why, George," he said, "how could you last so well?"

"There was air under the boat," said George, breathing hard, "about two pailfuls, I guess, that got caught under there when we tipped over. When I found I was caught, there I had to stay, crowding my nose up against the bottom. And you did n't come too soon, Chester," he added soberly. "I should have suffocated in another minute. And at the same time Rawson, it seems, was helping Jim into the boat."

"Yes," said Jim, sitting up at last; "and I was n't very well able to help myself, either." They sat for a few moments in silence.

"Well," said George, finally, "we 'll thank you fellows in due time; but now let 's get ashore."

So, picking up all scattered things, and towing

sail and mast and capsized boat, they rowed to shore, and at the boat-house emptied out the boat and put everything in its place. It was nearly dinner-time when they were finished, and so Chester remarked, starting to lead the way up to the camp.

“But wait,” said George, detaining him. “Don’t you think I have something to say to you after all this?”

“It was nothing,” said Chester, flushing.

“Nothing?” asked George, while the other two looked on. “Well, perhaps not. But Chester, I want to clear up everything that has been between us and you, so that we may start fresh. Now let me ask you a question.”

“Well,” said Chester, with a sense of disquiet, “ask.”

George went straight at his point:

“That time when Jim found Marshall eating Archie’s marshmallows, and you did not know that he stole them,—do you remember?—that was not the only time that Marshall had taken candy from the little boys. Now I know that you ate some of the other candy he took; did you know he stole it?”

“No!” cried Rawson, starting forward. But

Jim held him, saying, "Let Chester answer." And so all three stood with their eyes on Chester's face.

The color rose slowly in his cheeks. "If I had supposed you fellows thought that of me—" he said, and paused. He spoke with much difficulty.

George took his hand. "That 's enough, Chester. I am sorry that I thought it of you," he said. "Excuse me, and let 's be friends."

"I will," said Chester, and he squeezed the big boy's hand. And Jim came forward to lay his hand on Chester's shoulder. "I am sorry, too," he said, and added in a moment, looking first at George: "But now that it is all right, perhaps we can show Marshall, before the end of the summer, a thing or two that he will not like."

Chester smiled faintly as he thought of the Junior Cup, but he looked with frankness on his two new friends. "I am not troubled about Marshall any more," he said, "and he can do all he wishes, for all I care. I was n't nice at first, this summer," he added, with difficulty; "but ever since then I 've wanted more to please you than to do anything else, and if I 've done it I 'm satisfied."

And more rose to his lips from his deeply moved heart, but he repressed the words; for a boy, like

a man, fears to say all he feels. And boys, like men, are often ashamed to hear open praise; so, though Jim smiled, George turned to Rawson and pulled him forward.

"Come here, little Rat," he said gaily, to hide his embarrassment. "You are a good little Rat—do you know it?—for standing by Chester through thick and thin. There are four of us now; do you hear, Rat?"

"I hear," said the Rat, laughing. "And I 'm glad. And I feel something by which I know it 's dinner-time."

So they went; but as the big boys took the lead up the path, both wet, and as Chester followed, wet also, Rawson, the only dry one in the party, caught him by the hand and whispered: "It 's all right now, Chester, is n't it?" And Chester nodded at him, smiling.

Now, for a second time, Chester found himself something of a hero in camp, and this time with no doubtful cause for credit. But he had little time in which to think of it, for George and Jim took him in hand with an energy and vigor that astonished him; and with a strictness, too: for they claimed absolute control over all his movements—prescribed in the morning the length of his

swim, superintended his meals, forbade all sweets, and sent him to bed at night before themselves. Day by day he practised at the lake, and at the track they kept him hard at work, running, jumping, putting the shot; doing one day one thing, one another; giving him one day nothing but hard and heavy work, ordering the next nothing but things that called for quickness; directing him to put on his sweater and be quiet sometimes when he felt in best condition and ready for more; keeping him at other times at work till he was ready to drop.

Hardest on his spirit were the constant corrections. Humble as he had become, eager as he was to learn, there yet remained in him some of the old spirit, hot and quick, which he could not get rid of, and which, perhaps, it was not best entirely to be rid of, for the steel of the best temper takes the best edge. The words, "Not this way; do it so," grew wearisome to his ear; always he was being told, "That is not quite right; you must take more pains." Again and again he was put at the same thing, again and again he was admonished for his slowness in learning, until at last he wanted to burst out and cry, "Let me alone!" But the thought of the kindness of his new friends

in troubling themselves at all with him restrained him, and the thought of the possible reward of his work urged him constantly to new patience and fresh endeavors.

And if there had been anything needed to spur him on, it was always present in the sight of Marshall working by himself, clever and persistent, beautifully built, like an antique bronze. The sight of him flitting over the hurdles always roused in Chester both despair and hope. And if there had been any weakness in himself for his former friend, it was slowly but surely driven from his heart by the sayings, always biting and stinging, that came to him from Marshall's sharp tongue.

Now it was: "Chester has hired George and Jim with marshmallows, and is going to give them photographs of the Cup when he wins it"; and now it was: "Chester is a great mountain-climber and a fine swimmer—but he has n't climbed one mountain yet, nor crossed the lake." Now it was a slur upon his batting, now it was a joke upon his diving. Always the boy's tongue learned to find the boy's heart; till at last Chester was eager to win the Cup, not for the Cup alone, but also to beat Marshall.

And George's cheerful words made him think

better of his chances of success. "There are seven events," said he, "out of which, to get the Cup, you must win four. Three are surely his, for you can never touch him in the hurdles or the jumps. But I am not so sure that the other four are not yours; at any rate, we are training you just for them. In the hundred and the shot we are sure of you; and the swim and the quarter-mile, if we can only get enough staying power into you, are yours also. Chester, there is hope."

At last came for Chester the real beginning of the struggle. One morning, when but a week of camp was left, as the boys all left the breakfast-table, George sought Chester in the crowd, and bade him be at the boat-house at ten promptly. "Bring Rawson, if you want to," he said, "but be on time." And so at ten, with Rawson at his heels, he went down the path through the grove to the boat-house, and found the two big boys awaiting him. At sight of them, Chester knew at once what he was to do, for George held a bottle of oil in his hand, and Jim was looking at an object which Chester recognized at once as Mr. Holmes's stop-watch. His heart beat faster as he realized that the time had come for him to swim Terror.

"Strip, my boy," said George, "and let's get at it quickly. The wind is rising, and so will be the waves. You have a poorer day than Marshall, who had a wind behind him, while yours is across: but we can't wait longer; it is too near the sports."

Chester stripped and rubbed his joints with the oil, not to help him through the water, but to keep him warm. Then, while the others got into a boat, he took his stand at the edge of the boat-house platform, and stood waiting.

"Now, remember," said George, as the final word; "don't think of anything but just one thing, and that is your stroke. Get along quickly, but without hurry, for as soon as you get nervous, you will get tired, and will give out. Take a steady pace and hold it. Now, Chester, when Jim says 'three.'"

Jim, who was holding the watch, studied it for half a minute in silence. Then he said, "Ready? One, two, three!" And at the last word Chester dove into the water. "Steady, now," said George, as he rose and struck out. He took the side stroke, and began to swim toward the distant shore. A little behind him followed the boat, George rowing, Rawson in the bow, Jim in the stern holding the watch.

Now there began for Chester an experience which he never forgot. The swim which he had taken to the Island, but a short time before, had not tired him very much, and since then he had grown stronger and more skilful, so that he entered upon the task with confidence. The water was warm, the day clear and bright, the waves not too high. He swam low in the water, his head making way for him; he breathed through the mouth, as one must when swimming. Only his left shoulder and the left side of his head protruded from the water, as, giving himself up to the friendly element, he took his bearings by a distant hill, and swam with a strong and even stroke.

He heard, occasionally, the sound of a voice behind him, as the boys in the boat talked in low tones. Once in a while he saw them, as a twist of his body turned his head farther about, or as the wind sent the boat to leeward. But most of the time it seemed as if he were alone in the world, down there in the lake; he heard only the splash of the waves and the sweep of the wind, and it seemed that only the birds overhead, with the mountains and hills, were alive to watch him swimming. The water beneath him rocked him with a gentle movement; sometimes a wave rolled

right over his head. But always shaking the water from his eyes and ejecting it from his mouth, he swam steadily onward. The loneliness was not terrible; he seemed with his friends, the wind, and the water, and the hills. All wished him well, and gaining at last what the athlete knows as the second wind, it seemed to Chester, enjoying the force of his body and the beauties of nature, as if he could swim there forever.

His progress was fast. Minute after minute put behind him rod after rod of the tossing blue water. The dark spot on the lake which was his head, with the white cleaving shoulder that followed it, and the green glancing body seen through the water, left behind it at last its furlongs and its quarter-miles. To the boys in the boat keeping the time, and noting by the Island and the shore the distance covered, it was evident that he was making good time. And Chester, down there in the water, alone, as it seemed to him, swam with delight.

He knew that he had passed the half-mile, for the Island was behind him. He could see, from his position on the surface, the hills, low in the distance, and the mountains standing above them. Tallest of all, the mountain which their party had

attempted stood clear to view. On its summit was the scar of the landslide, of the color of ocher, like yellow clay gleaming in the sun. And as Chester watched it he saw again in his mind the dreadful landslide, and imagined himself standing above the mass of stones and trees heaped at the bottom of the gloomy gorge. But that was past. Then it was night; now it was broad day, and the sun and the bright water and the smiling sky were around him. So he swam steadily.

But as onward he went, his feet and hands doing their work rhythmically, it was evident that the wind was becoming stronger, the waves higher. The water tossed him less regularly, and the waves broke more frequently over his head. Water came into his throat, and he had to cough to get it out. Each time after he lifted his head and cleared his eyes and throat, he laid his ear again in the water and swam onward. But the increasing uncertainty of the waves, moving at last in an angry little chop, made swimming more difficult. He was not so sure of each stroke. Presently, by a nervous instinct, he tried to avoid the breaking waves. He lost speed, his stroke was less regular, and those in the boat said to themselves, "He is getting tired."

Still onward he swam, but the water, only now so friendly, seemed finally to dispute his passage, and the feeling arose in Chester's mind that it was struggling with him. It cut off more often by its tossing waves his view of the distant hills, so that at last he could be sure of seeing only the tallest mountain of all, with its bright scar. And that scar seemed to speak to him of destruction and death—of the death which might once have come to him; and in his struggle with the water death suddenly seemed to be not so very far away. He did not know how close behind was the boat. How easy to sink exhausted in the water, which seemed to be growing colder! He thought of the depths below him—of how cold and rayless they must be, where only the mussels grew, but where fishes would come to pick his bones. And so that boy, once so joyous in his swimming, now was struggling to put from him the fear of death.

Those in the boat could not read his thoughts, but they knew that he was flagging. And so into Chester's vision came suddenly the boat, which George was rowing faster. As it was abreast of him, George leaned over and spoke cheerily: "Take a brace, Chester; you are trying too much to lift yourself. Give yourself to the water; swim

low, and keep it up steadily. You are almost there, and ahead of time."

But instead of being cheered by the words and the news, Chester raised his head and said: "I don't believe I can finish, George."

"Nonsense, Chester!" said George, with energy; "you must finish."

And so Chester laid his head again in the water, and struggled on. "Take the breast stroke," said George. Turning obediently, he swam for a while with the other stroke. His fear of drowning was now gone, with the sight of the boat and the voice of his friend, but weariness remained. To his tired shoulders it appeared after a minute that the side stroke was easier, and he turned again on his side. He began to be cold, and he turned his eyes on the friendly boat.

George divined what was in his thoughts, and spoke distinctly. "Listen, Chester," he said; "you can't get into the boat. I will not take you in."

And Jim, breaking his silence, said: "No, Chester; you must finish. Listen, my boy. You have come very well so far, and have less than two hundred yards to go in five minutes in order to make less than three quarters of an hour. Brace up, Chester!"

He heard, and understood; and so, setting his



“ ‘ALL OVER!’ CRIED GEORGE. ‘HOW MUCH TIME, JIM?’ ”

teeth, he determined to go on till he sank. So, fighting his fatigue and his cold, fighting, too, the baffling water, he urged himself onward till to his blurred sight trees began to rise above him from the shore which was so close. "A little more," cried Rawson from the boat. A little more! He pushed himself onward till the branches overhung him, till bushes showed on the water's edge. How much farther?

"All over!" cried George, suddenly. "Stand up!" The boat ran in close beside him.

Chester put down his feet and found the firm bottom just beneath him. He attempted to stand, and half raised himself from the water. But his muscles refused to work; he fell forward, and though in vain he tried to support himself on his hands, he plunged beneath the water. Then George, dropping the oars, all clothed as he was, leaped into the water, and raised in his arms the choking boy.

"All over!" he cried. "How much time, Jim?"

Jim snapped the watch and put it in his pocket. The others listened for his answer, and even poor Chester, with singing head, tried to catch the words.

"Forty-four minutes and fifty seconds," said Jim. "Thirty seconds less than Marshall's time. That means five points for the Cup."

CHAPTER VII



As the sports approached, the last day which was to test all the work, all the lessons of the summer, there passed letters between Mr. Holmes and Chester's father.

The final letter is of especial interest:

I am glad that you are coming to the sports [wrote Mr. Holmes], and I agree with you that it is wise to keep out of Chester's sight till they are finished, for the additional excitement might make him too nervous. Whether you see him win the Cup or not, I am sure that you will be satisfied with him, for I think all has been accomplished that you hoped. His experiences of the summer have taught him modesty, and I am pleased to notice that he is carefully cultivating good nature. He has become very popular, and all the camp, except a few boys, are partizans on his side in the approaching contest.

And Mr. Holmes's report was true, for Chester had become a different boy. The two accidents that had put it in his power to save life had given

him a position of importance which he was not slow to improve. While he was training his body for the coming competition, he did not forget to discipline also the peevish disposition that had previously got him into trouble. He found it not so very difficult, now that the minds of all were prepared to receive him at his best, to prove to others, even before he had proved it to himself, that he was good-natured. So the little boys whose attachment he had begun to cultivate in his loneliness were his staunch friends in his prosperity, and the whole camp, except that little knot that held aloof, grew fond of Chester.

The morning of the sports came, and with it trouble. For soon after breakfast George Tenney, seated by his bed in the shanty, heard his name called, and turning, saw Chester coming to him with distress and anger in his face.

"George!" called Chester, again.

"What is it, my boy?" said the older lad.

"Oh, George," cried Chester in despair, "my running-shoes are gone!"

"Gone?" cried George, springing to his feet. "Where can they have gone?"

"I have looked everywhere," said Chester, "and I have asked everybody. Rawson is hunting for

them now. I kept them right on the shelf by my bed, and anybody might take them."

"Anybody?" George sat down again. "Then of course we know who took them," he said calmly.

"But what good does that do?" asked Chester.

George thought. "None," he said, after a while. "If he has taken them—you know whom I mean—he has been clever enough to hide them well. You must run in rubber soles, Chester."

It was true. There were but four or five pairs of spiked shoes in the camp, all, except those belonging to Chester and Marshall, the property of the older boys. They were consequently all too large.

"I am sorry," said Jim Pierce, when he was called into the consultation. "That puts you at a great disadvantage, Chester, if Marshall runs in spikes and you without. It may cost you the Cup—as it was meant to," he added meaningly. And after a moment's silence he spoke again.

"The Senior Cup is mine," he said. "George won it last year, and by the rules he can't compete again, so I am sure of it. But I would gladly give it to you, Chester, if you are beaten out by this trick."

"It is no matter," said Chester, gulping his dis-

appointment. And then he looked the two big boys in the face, and uttered what he thought: "If I don't win the Cup, I have won more than the Cup, because I have you fellows for my friends. And so I shall be satisfied."

"Brrr!" said George, with an assumption of anger. "Go lie down, young fellow!" And Jim stooped to tie his shoe, so that Chester might not see his face. But both were pleased at his words. And the shoes, though sought for everywhere, were not to be found. Not for a year did they turn up, carefully tucked away in an unused corner of the boat-house.

Chester did go and lie down, as George told him, and kept himself quiet all the morning and for an hour after dinner, till the sound of the bugle. Then he rose, and ready for the struggle, went down to the field. At one part, so placed that they could best see everything, was a little crowd of spectators, fathers and mothers and relatives of the boys, or those interested in the camp; and among them, though Chester did not know it, was his father. The boy's heart was beating fast as, with a crowd of others, he entered the big field. Other boys surrounded him, talking nervously. At the sight of the place where he was to compete, and of the peo-

ple that were to watch him, Chester himself began to be very nervous.

But George and Jim, with Rawson, took him apart from the rest to a place where, in the shade, they had formed of blankets a screen from the wind, and had brought a mattress for him to lie on. There was a sponge there, and a towel, and a bottle marked "Alcohol." At a little distance, Chester noticed, Marshall had laid down blankets for himself to lie on. Behind the screen, which also cut off the view of the spectators, the two big boys rubbed Chester down and made him ready for the struggle. Of the events of the day I shall describe only those that were for the Junior Cup. As was expected, the Senior Cup fell into the hands of Jim Pierce, who won it with ease. The real contest was between Chester and Marshall; let us take it as it happened, without noticing the one-sided events between the older boys.

"Remember," said George, as he rubbed his protégé, "the quarter-mile comes last, and for that you must save yourself. In everything else go easy when you can. Never finish your fastest, so long as a race is yours. Remember, in the hundred and the shot you must have first place. In the hurdles and the running high you must have second; so long as you beat every one else, let Marshall

win in these. In the shot and in the running broad, do your best." And as George was concluding his summary, Mr. Holmes summoned the contestants to appear.

The hurdles were the first event, and four boys came to the mark for the race. "Remember," whispered George at the last, "pay no attention to Marshall at all. Get a good start, and run easily, taking pains only to beat Jack, here; he is the next best."

Chester stood at the scratch for the first real race of his life. He dug the holes for his feet, and tested them once or twice, as the older boys had showed him. Then he stood and waited. He was at one edge of the track, Marshall was at the other, and between them were the two other boys. Before them were the rows of hurdles. Chester felt himself nervous, and glanced at the others; the two were fidgeting visibly, but Marshall was cool, and stood waiting, looking straight ahead. In spite of his remembrance of all the troubles of the summer, and, most recent, the loss of his shoes, Chester could not repress a feeling of admiration for that graceful figure.

"Get ready!" said Mr. Holmes. "On your marks!"

Chester placed his toes in the holes he had dug,

and stooping, placed his fingers on the line drawn in front of him.

“Get set!”

He half straightened his legs, so that his weight was thrown forward on his hands, and with his arms trembling under the strain and the excitement, awaited the signal.

There was a sharp report from the pistol, and the four boys leaped forward. Running for a few steps stooping and with a quick step, Chester straightened in a moment and lengthened his stride, then crooking his forward leg across his body, rose for the hurdle. The four boys cleared it together.

The next ten yards showed how the race was to go. Marshall drew ahead, and jumped at the fourth stride for the second hurdle. He hurdled equally well from either foot, and for him the distance was too great for three strides, too short for five. Chester rose almost at the same moment and from the same foot, with the same twisting body and dragging leg, but he was behind. The two other boys were already in the rear. A third and a fourth hurdle put distances between all four. Then Chester slackened pace, and paying attention only to the boy behind him, taking care also to clear the hurdles without a fall, he finished the race

at his ease. Marshall crossed the line a couple of yards ahead of him.

"Did you see," said George, as he drew Chester out of the crowd, "that Marshall was lying low? He slowed up just as soon as you did, and merely kept his lead. Oh, he is a clever one!"

Next came the hundred-yards dash, run with only enough pause to clear the hurdles off the track and run the race for the older boys. As in the hurdles, there were four boys entered for the race. Of two Chester had no fear; of Marshall he had his doubts, for already in the hurdles had he missed his spikes. It would be easy to slip. But he took his old holes, which were assigned to him by lot, and made himself ready with as much composure as he could for the thought that was dinning in his head: This race I must win! As they arranged themselves Marshall was now the second from him, and Chester was conscious of his presence. But he did not look at him now. Instead he caught the eye of the boy next to him, who smiled faintly, and then he nodded to little Rawson, who, while George and Jim had gone up to the finish, remained to watch the start.

"Get ready!" said Mr. Holmes again; and Chester turned to the track. "On your marks! Set!"

The four backs were bent, the legs and arms were quivering.

Again the report, and the four leaped forward; but the treacherous earth, never firm enough for a good track, slipped under the rubber, and Chester was behind, a yard lost in the first second, and confused in his stride. With that disadvantage it took him twenty yards to recover himself. In another twenty he had passed the two slower boys, but Marshall was ahead. He strained to overtake the flying figure, the fierce scratch of whose spikes on the track, and whose quick panting breath, he noticed even in the fury of the race. Inch after inch he drew up on him, but the distance was so short! They reached the first of the crowd that lined the track on either side. Chester was conscious that he was flying past people who were shouting, and he knew that at last he was at the shoulder of the figure that but now was in front of him. A final effort, with lunging arms and head dropped low on his chest. He felt the rush of air on his face; he knew that the crowd was roaring; then he felt the slight pull of the worsted across his breast, and knew that the race was over. He threw up his hands to throw himself out of his stride, then slowed up and stopped, while the others

ran on for a few more yards. He turned; who had won?

A familiar figure, which yet he could not recognize for the surging blood that throbbed in his head and confused his vision, came running toward him. But it spoke, and he knew the voice. It was George.

"A good race, Chester!" The tone was joyous; then it must be all right!

"Who won?" asked Chester, out of a dry throat.

"Why, you did, by a good foot!" And so the judges presently declared, and Chester was led away to his mattress.

Then came, among tedious waits, what George called the "mere formalities" of the field events. They were foredestined, and every one knew it. First the broad jump went to Marshall, Chester following. Then Chester took the shot-putting, with Marshall second. Last, in the high jump, Chester left the contest as soon as all but he and Marshall had fallen out. He remained for a moment to watch Marshall jump; but he, clearing the bar once to insure his place, took up his sweater and walked away to his blanket.

"Oh, he is a clever one!" said George, again. "He is n't going to waste any strength in exhibition jumps."

Chester lay on his mattress while for the last time George rubbed his legs. What he thought in those moments was enough to make him nervous, for everything depended on the last short contest, lasting only a minute, which was soon to come. The score was even between him and Marshall; who won the quarter-mile won the Cup. The work of the summer, his own efforts, with the careful schooling of the older boys—all would be tested by that single race. And the Cup itself, the beautiful piece of silver of which he had caught but one glimpse the day before as it was unpacked from its wrappings, would then either be his own, to take home and show to his father and keep always, or would go to Marshall.

But he was content. Excited as he was, and hopeful, he kept repeating to himself one thing: that he had had a happy summer, that he had gained the friends he wanted, and that nothing else mattered. For with an intuition almost beyond his years he had come in the past few days to know what meant the lessons of the summer, and to understand, if vaguely, the value of his new friends. He understood at last what Mr. Holmes had meant when he said: "There is little that any one of us can accomplish alone." It is not well for a boy to

think too seriously on these things, lest he become old before his time. And, fortunately for him, Chester did not know much beyond this: that what he had learned he was never to unlearn, and that good friends were the finest things that a boy could have. So, in spite of excitement, he waited the final race with contentment at the result.

And Marshall? We have not seen much of the workings of his mind, which would perhaps be an unpleasant, even if profitable, study. It is a little difficult to guess what he thought, as, apart from the crowd, he too lay and waited for the race. Did he think of the other boy whom he might have kept for his friend, who now was engaged with him in earnest competition? If Marshall, too, reviewed the summer as he lay, did he, too, congratulate himself on its close? No; bitter was his soul as he rose for the last race; sullen was his resolve to win—to win!

“Jim has won the Senior Cup!” cried Rawson, appearing before George and Chester.

“I am glad!” cried they both.

“And it’s time for Chester,” added the little fellow. “Mr. Holmes is calling for the Junior quarter-mile.”

They rose and went, and presently all the con-

testants were gathered at the starting-place. There were seven in all, a large number for the narrow track, where for a straightaway but four could run comfortably abreast. Yet Mr. Holmes knew that to run them in heats would be too severe a strain, and he knew also that in a moment after the start they would be spread in a line around the curve of the track. Therefore he decided to run them in one race, and shook up in a hat their names on pieces of paper, to draw for positions. By accident Chester drew the inside place, giving him the advantage, and Marshall was the one next him at his right hand. The other five boys were spread out across the track.

For the last time Chester scraped the holes for his feet, and looked to the lacings of his shoes. He was intensely conscious of all that was going on about him. At the inside of the track, close to his elbow, was a group of the older boys, and the judges. On the outside, close to the line which was at once starting-point and finish, were the visitors. From them came a continual murmur, with the rustle of dresses. Behind him stood Mr. Holmes, who gave Chester one glance of encouragement when their eyes met. And at his side were the other boys, employed as he himself, while close to

him, almost touching, was Marshall. It happened that the two boys turned toward each other at the same moment, perhaps not accidentally, and looked each other in the face. Chester tried to smile, but there was a cold glitter in the other's eye, and a hard expression at his mouth, as he turned away.

"Get ready!" said Mr. Holmes. The boys all stooped; the spectators pressed up closer; the timers stood waiting, their watches in their hands. "On your marks! Set!" Close to Chester was Marshall, his elbow touching the other's side. Chester felt it, Mr. Holmes saw it, but each said to himself: "It can't be helped; the other boys are just as close together."

Mr. Holmes fired.

A scramble, a panting rush, and they were off. What? All but Chester, who had fallen at the side of the track. None had seen the shrewd push that had sent him sprawling in the grass. None had seen, but some suspected, and wild with rage, George sprang forward and pulled Chester to his feet.

"Will you claim foul?" he roared.

"No!" answered Chester, equally furious; and springing to the track, he touched his foot to the line and was off after the rest.

But what a handicap! Fifteen yards divided Chester from his nearest competitor, and a bunch of five boys shut him off from Marshall, who was already leading. Yet now he neither missed his spikes, nor counted the distance as anything, for the black anger that surged in his breast. His legs were springs, his feet shod like those of Mercury, as, scarcely feeling the ground, he sped after the rest. His muscles were tense, his sinews like bowstrings, as stride by stride he gained on them. They were at the turn; he saw Marshall already on the curve, but he himself was close behind the boy next in front, and in a moment was ready to pass him. He had to take a wider curve, and so to run a longer distance than the rest, in order to pass the close huddle. But one by one he cut them down and left them struggling behind; as he came out on the straight, Marshall only was in front. Spurred by the sting of his anger, foot by foot he crept up; nearer and nearer the leader heard the footsteps behind him, until at last the two boys were running shoulder to shoulder.

A burst of applause, faint in the distance and from the rushing air in his ears, came to Chester from across the field. Stride for stride, yard for yard, he held his place till they had passed the half-

way mark and were at the second turn. Now was the test; after that tremendous spurt could he yet hold out? He was sure of it. The skilled driver of his will, trained through all the summer, was holding well in hand, like mettled horses, his muscles and his burning resentment. Round the curve the two boys swept, their feet striking in unison, their hands swinging low, their eyes on the track. Side by side they swung into the straight. In a moment there were but fifty yards more, and Chester knew that he could finish.

“Now!” said he aloud. There was a thrill of challenge in his voice, and Marshall heard him. Their superbly regular movements changed suddenly into the splendid broken action of the sprinter. Each was nearly at the end of his powers, each was putting forth now what final force he could call to his aid; and Chester summoned more than Marshall had. The caldron of his passion was still boiling, and its heat and its force gave unconquerable energy to his light-moving limbs. With grim joy he saw that he was gaining. Still he rushed forward; but Marshall could not respond. At his utmost speed Chester crossed the line, but breathless and tottering, Marshall could scarcely finish.

And so the great day was over, and the contest was finished, and everybody cheered and waved and made fools of themselves. Chester's face was covered with confusion when he was led forward to receive the Cup, but his happiness was running over when he found himself in the arms of his father. And so the camp must slip out of our sight, for its story is done. Yet, while for the present we dismiss Marshall, though with pity in our hearts, before going on to what happened later in the lives of the boys let us give a last glance at Chester and his friends.

As soon as he could Chester introduced his father to his three friends, Rawson and George and Jim. "These are my friends, father," he said, somewhat moved, "without whom I could not have won the Cup, and whom I prize more than the Cup."

"Nonsense!" muttered George, digging with his foot in the ground, for he was abashed in the presence of Chester's father. He did not wonder at the way in which Chester spoke, for he knew the boy's affectionate disposition. But he did wonder, and the others wondered, too, that Mr. Fiske's voice trembled as he thanked them for what they had done for his son. But Mr. Holmes, who stood by, wondered not at all.

CHAPTER VIII



IF a man may feel gratified at the working of a plan, or proud of its success, Mr. Fiske certainly had the right. He enjoyed it as he held in his hand the Cup that his son had won, and read in his face the changes which the summer had brought about. Yet the very completeness of Chester's reform carried with it the seeds of destruction, and Mr. Fiske reflected with a little doubt upon the praises that would be showered on the lad by his aunts and sisters at home. He saw that success carried with it the duty to keep what had been gained. What should be done?

It was Mr. Holmes who showed the way. He mentioned that he had been offered the position of head-master at the Stonefield School for boys.

"And you have accepted, I hope?" asked Mr. Fiske, quickly.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Then," cried Chester's father, striking his hands together with energy, "the boy shall go with you!"

And to that decision, though suddenly made, he adhered. There was outcry at home, but Mr. Fiske was not to be changed.

"Boarding-schools are not for every boy," he agreed. "For Chester, however, nothing else will do. He has made a fine stride toward manliness at the camp. I cannot have him slipping back. Anna," he said testily to his sister's interruption, "do you suppose I am glad to part from the boy? And besides, Mr. Holmes will still have his eye on him. It 's a chance not to be lost." So Mr. Fiske sent his son away from his side, concealing, with the stoicism of a Roman, the self-denial which Chester did not appreciate until after-years.

A year and a half in the school brought Chester to a position which some envied. It began to be whispered, "Chester is sure to be captain of the nine next year." Wherever that was said, it was evident by the expression on the faces of the hearers that Chester was on the way to the highest position in the school.

Scholarship aside, that was true. And scholarship included, there was no glory in the eyes of

the boys equal to that of captain of the nine. Chester himself longed for it and worked for it, as the best ending of his school life, and as the best introduction for him at college. And what much helped him to it was his simple habit of life, which was essentially manly. At least his digestion was good and his lungs were strong. Moreover, there lay nothing on his conscience. For to be manly one need not be a man. Chester aped no grown-up doings, had no mannish talk, pretended to no worldly wisdom, and felt no wish to acquire the small bad habits which mark the lower rather than the higher side of man's estate.

Thus began Chester's third half-year, which was the third from the last. Returning from vacation, he unpacked his trunk, discarded his hat for a cap, and in the absence of his room-mate (not yet arrived) set out to find old friends, make new ones, and to shuffle off as well as he might the feeling of homesickness which yet clung to him.

The familiar sights, the long corridors resounding, the bustle of the new arrivals, made him at once himself. Old friends came and locked arms with him. They wandered to kitchen and library, school-room and gymnasium; for it was one of the two free afternoons in the term (the other being

before departure) when there were no rules. They stood before the bulletin-board and read the old notices, amusing now with their reminders of the past. But while they stood there a big boy came and posted up the first notice of the new term. It was Stukeley, the captain of the nine.

"Hullo, Chester," he said; "here's something for you to read."

And Chester was pleased with the attention from his chief. The bulletin read: "Baseball practice begins next Monday afternoon in the gymnasium. Candidates report at four o'clock."

"Hey, Chester!" said a companion, and nudged him in the side. "Hey? You going to catch, this year?"

"Oh, go 'long," replied Chester. "Stukeley catches, of course. I'm lucky if I'm in the field."

"But next year, surely," said one of the boys. "And captain, too."

"Don't, Johnny," protested Chester, blushing. Chester still could blush.

A boy came by. "Mr. Holmes is looking for you, Chester."

"Where?" asked Chester.

"He was in the upper hall."

Chester hastened there. But Mr. Holmes had gone.

"Hard to find him," said a boy of experience. "I think he went to his study."

Chester went downstairs again. There he saw Mr. Holmes talking with a gentleman. They went up the stairs together. Chester followed slowly. A group of friends detained him. When he reached the upper hall once more Mr. Holmes was not to be seen.

"Oh," said a boy of whom he inquired, "he's gone with somebody's father, showing him the school." Chester knew that was a matter of more than a quarter-hour, and for the present gave up the chase. He went back to his own room to see if his room-mate had come.

A trunk stood open by the bed. Shoes, neckties, underwear, and coats were on all horizontal surfaces, including the floor. The bureau drawers were open, and a short, square, ruddy lad was cramming them full. Chester stood and watched him. The boy reached for a pile of underwear. "It takes so long to pack!" he said. "But I can unpack in ten minutes, arranging things afterward."

"A bad habit, Rawson," said Chester.

"Whoop!" cried his friend, and turning, thudded

the whole pile of soft clothing into Chester's breast. "Here we are again!"

Such a greeting between old friends! Do boys ever do the same elsewhere? Do they rush into one another's arms, and, instead of embracing, wrestle? Do they punch heads, cry names such as "rascal" and "fellow," and crash shouting upon the groaning bed? If they do not, I am almost afraid to indicate what Chester and Rawson did, and so say nothing. Yet they were good friends, too, a proverb in the school.

So, drawing a veil upon their previous actions, we will picture the two gathering up the scattered clothes, and with one purpose only—that of haste—stuffing them into the bureau. "Oh," Rawson was saying, "I want to get into the corridor and see the boys."

"Is this," spoke a soft voice at the door, a woman's voice, "the room of Chester Fiske?"

A lady stood on the threshold—"the right kind," the boys saw at a glance; gentle, sweet, and lovable, but with a paleness in her cheek that meant ill health. Somebody's mother, the boys knew at once.

"Yes," she said when the boys turned; "you are Chester Fiske. I know your face."

"Won't you come in, madam?" asked Chester.

She entered hesitating. "I hope I do not interrupt, and yet I wish to speak to you. Oh, don't go," she cried, as Rawson moved to the door. "You are Rawson, are n't you? May I speak to you, too?"

"How does she know us?" both boys thought. Chester answered the question in his own way: "You know my father, madam?"

"No," she answered; "I have seen you before." She hesitated to say where; she still remembered the pang when Chester destroyed one of her dearest hopes, and could not speak of it. "You know my son. He is coming here to school this term, and oh, I do hope that you will be friends!"

"Why, yes," said Rawson, bold to promise; "I am sure we shall be friends."

She held a hand to each of the boys, and drew them to her. "I must leave him among strangers. I must go away on account of my health, and where I am going there is no school for him. So many times I have separated from him and left him to himself! I am so glad you two are here; he used to know you both. You will help him, won't you?"

"What is his name?" both of the boys

were wondering. But there was no hesitating. "Yes'm," they said together, soberly on account of her earnestness.

"He is a little headstrong," she said; "and he has n't had much care. I have been so sick at times, and he has no father. Oh, boys, I shall depend upon you—you and Mr. Holmes—to make him happy! He has faults. Dear boys, you will be patient with him, won't you?"

Wondering, they answered "Yes" again.

"You never saw me before," she said. "But I hope you do not dislike me." They could but like her. The touch of her hand, the look of her face, were enough for that. And her appeal to them touched all their chivalry.

"Oh, yes," they cried; "we do!"

"I hope you will like my boy. I feel better at leaving him, now I have seen you here. Good-by, dear boys. I thank you for your promise."

She pressed their hands warmly. "Good-by," she said once more, and left them.

Though they were alone in the room, they could not speak to each other. Neither had ever known a mother. Each thought, "If I had a mother like that!"

"Well," said Chester at last, with an effort,

"let 's finish your unpacking and go along. Mr. Holmes wants to see me." They finished it together in silence, each thinking of the lady, neglecting, in the thought of her, to wonder more about her son. Presently they went out into the corridors.

But Mr. Holmes was not to be found. Though Chester and Rawson searched first the upper and then the lower corridor, the school-rooms, and even the dining-hall, there was no Mr. Holmes to be seen. They finally came back to the bulletin-board. Many of the boys were gathered there.

Of the upper class there was Stukeley again, to be noticed by whom was an honor to make a small boy pink; and Joe Taylor, the quiet scholar whom the boys called "Jeremy," and loved (though they did not know it) as much as Stukeley. He was a boy of unyielding principle, and his influence was so strong in the school that Mr. Holmes had made him head monitor. And of the Second Class were several boys, all of whom, being diffident about speaking to the older boys, immediately swarmed upon Chester and Rawson with cries of welcome.

There was the vacation to be discussed and experiences at home to be compared. And news of

the new term, notable among the items of which was the fact that Otto Beech was not coming back, and that there was a new boy in his place, going to room with Ben Farley—a Second Class boy, therefore. And he had stunning things, nothing less than a gold watch, and lots of books, and a baseball outfit not to be beat. And Walter Rogers was back with a black eye, which the boys were sure he got in a fight, because Walter insisted that he hit himself on the corner of a bookcase.

Then Stukeley pushed into the group, and said a word to Rawson. And he laid his hand on Chester's shoulder and said: "I mean to coach you a lot, this spring." Chester could scarcely find words to thank him. And while Rawson was nudging the nearest boy, both as pleased as Chester was himself, there was a stir at the door, and a great voice, recognized by all as belonging to Ben Farley, roared through the hall: "New boy!" All turned and looked.

There was the new boy, sure enough, well dressed, handsome, and not quite at home. In fact, his manner was nervous. He felt the cruelty of Ben Farley's introduction, and as a dozen pairs of eyes were suddenly fixed on him, he wished himself away. But a boy can't run; though flush-

ing, he stood resolutely. Then, as Stukeley turned to look, the whole group shifted position, and Chester and the new boy came face to face.

The new boy was expecting the meeting; he waited. Chester was surprised, and needed a moment to gather his wits. After nearly two years he recognized the other, remembering the circumstances of their last meeting. And though he did not consider it just then, this time the positions were reversed: Chester was the old boy, Marshall was the new. For it was Marshall Moore.

A moment they stood so, just long enough for the other boys to see the recognition. Then came another bellow from Ben Farley: "Oh, Marshall, your mother wants you!" And Marshall turned and went away.

Chester looked at Rawson. The other boys crowded around. Even Stukeley forgot his dignity and pushed in with the rest. "Do you know him, Chester?" he demanded. "Do you know him, Rawson?"

Rawson returned Chester's glance. "Why, yes," he answered, not looking at Stukeley; "we know him."

"Yes," said Chester; "we know him."

"Who is he?" asked Stukeley. And the boys

all cried together: "Where did you know him?" "What is his name?" "Tell us about him!"

Rawson and Chester still looked at each other. The remembrance of the summer at the camp, the echo of old animosities and injuries, rose in the minds of both and sparkled in their eyes. Recollections came crowding. "We can be even with him now!" thought both the boys. They forgot for a moment that they had been even with him then. Chester made ready to speak words to express his feelings. He forgot that so much time had passed, that he had the power to spoil completely Marshall's life at school.

"His name is Marshall Moore," he said. "He is a boy I never—"

"—Could trust," he was about to say. But a voice, a little hurried, interrupted, and there stood Mr. Holmes.

"Chester," he said, "I wish to speak to you at once."

Mr. Holmes usually persuaded, but when he chose he could command. There was an emphasis on the "at once" that stopped Chester's voice like a hand on his mouth. He turned to obey. "You too, Rawson," added Mr. Holmes; and Rawson followed without a word.

When Chester afterward thought of that moment, he could never be sufficiently thankful for the instant of time that saved him.

Mr. Holmes led the way to his study, a room with all his athletic trophies, beautifully furnished, loved by the boys. Chester and Rawson followed, a little interested in what was to come, but more taken up with their discovery. Marshall Moore at the school! They did not speak as they kept close behind Mr. Holmes, but their glances showed their feelings. Marshall was at their mercy, and they knew it. The knowledge came suddenly, too suddenly for any but one feeling to show itself—the old-time desire for revenge.

No; Chester and Rawson were not yet thoroughly manly.

Mr. Holmes let them into the study and shut the door. The boys were upon him at once. "Oh, Mr. Holmes!" they cried together.

"Well?" he asked.

"Marshall Moore is at the school!"

"Yes," he responded; "I know it. It is about him that I wish to speak with you."

The boys were taken aback. Mr. Holmes was calm and reflective; they saw no gleam of exultation in his eye. In reality he was thinking how

best to open his subject. The boys' glances wandered to each other, to the floor, then out the window. There they saw a sight that roused them.

The lady, she who had come to their room, was going away. Her carriage stood at the roadside, waiting; she was talking with a boy, her son. They saw her lips move as she spoke to the boy, whose back was toward them. By the same impulse they moved nearer the window to see better. Mr. Holmes waited.

They saw her lovely, earnest face; could remember the kindly tones of her voice, and almost heard them in imagination. Her sweet eyes were on her son; they could see her lips tremble, and read her emotion. The same thought came to both the boys: "Oh, to be loved like that!" Forgetful of manners, they watched her take farewell, kiss her boy, turn at the carriage door for a last look, then vanish. The carriage whirled her away, and they with her son stood gazing after. Then the boy turned to come into the school, and they looked at him.

It was Marshall!

He looked up, and saw them staring; frowned, and passed out of sight. Both boys felt as if every idea were gone. "She is *his* mother!" exclaimed

Chester. They forgot Mr. Holmes, forgot everything else, and looked at each other amazed.

"Yes," said Mr. Holmes, presently; "she is his mother. Have you spoken to her?"

"Why, she came to our room," explained Rawson.

"And she asked us to promise to be good to her boy," said Chester. "We did n't know who he was."

"Now that you know," asked Mr. Holmes, "will you keep your promise?"

They hesitated.

"Wait," said the master, "until I have said my say."

CHAPTER IX



HERE was a fire glowing in the grate. Mr. Holmes moved his chair to the hearth. "Draw up, boys," he said. They seated themselves before the coals, and waited for the master to speak. He studied the fire for a little while, then raised his eyes to their faces, commanded their attention by his glance, and began.

"I have n't a word to say, Chester," he said, "in defense of the things that Marshall did to you that summer at the camp. Not a word. They were mean; they were unfair. But I wish to tell you boys the story of Marshall's life, as he does not know it himself, and see if you cannot find in your hearts some pity for him.

"Marshall has never had a home. I know that you, Rawson, have not, either. But things have gone worse with Marshall than with you. His father died when he was young, his mother has

always been ill, and Marshall has been to school after school, in Europe, England, and America, never two years in the same place, never two years under the same influences. What he needed he never had—a firm hand over him. You have had your father, Chester; and your guardian, Rawson, has watched you always. But from the time when he was five years old Marshall has never had restraint, and the result has been very bad for him.

“If you can imagine what it is to be always among strangers, you will have some idea of Marshall’s life. You don’t know it, Rawson, though you may think you do. You have the faculty of making friends. Marshall has never yet been truly happy except with his mother; and she, on account of her health, has always had to live among the mountains, where there have not been good schools for Marshall’s education.

“The result has been bad. I once believed it was impossible to reform him. But he has had a deep experience in the desperate illness from which his mother has just recovered. He has promised—not carelessly, boys. I have undertaken to help him. But I can do very little unless you help me.”

For Mr. Holmes knew that in a boarding-school

the masters, while their influence was strong, could not reach a boy as his mates could, could never exercise over him the same constant influence, could not stand at his elbow in every temptation of his life. The boys must help him.

"I speak to you frankly," he said. "His mother is anxious about him. He was expelled from his last school. You are never to say this of him, remember." The boys felt that they would rather die than tell. "And we must, *must*, MUST help him here and now, or I shall have the greatest disappointment of my life."

He rose and walked about. The boys sat silent; they did not dare look at each other. Mr. Holmes came back and stood by his chair.

"In taking Marshall into the school," he said, "I deliberately ran a risk. You two know him, and have cause to dislike him. But I believed I could depend upon you. I trust in your generosity; I am not afraid to appeal to it. You are in a position to spoil, by a word, every chance that Marshall has of succeeding here at school. I beg of you not to speak."

The hair rose on Chester's head. He had almost said the word! On Rawson's face was something as near fright as ever appeared there.

"And if you can help me," concluded Mr. Holmes, "I shall be greatly obliged."

Chester found his voice. "Oh, Mr. Holmes," he cried, "we will help you all we can!" And Rawson said the same.

"Thank you, boys," said the master. He spoke a few words of courage and energy, and then dismissed them. They left with a sense of having promised solemnly. They felt, also, a confidence inspired by Mr. Holmes, and when presently they met the First Class boys again, Chester spoke to them with a boldness he really felt.

"That new boy," he said, "I believe we'll like. And," he added, "he used to be a first-rate ball-player."

But when the two were together in their room, the enthusiasm having passed, they looked at each other in doubt. They knew how hard it was for a boy to reform.

And Marshall knew it too. Had n't he tried? Had n't he, in school after school, made fresh beginning after fresh beginning, only to fail? Sometimes the circumstances of his wandering life had led him away from true friends and a good start. He had been discouraged; even now he was on the verge of recklessness. To be good meant

hard work; to have a good time was easy, and oh, he did enjoy a good time!

The influence of his mother was strong upon him. But as Marshall faced the school, thinking that of all its boys he knew but two, and that those were two he might fairly count his enemies, he recognized the odds against him. He knew how slight, in certain ways, was the protection of the head-master. He knew how strong a prejudice could be excited against him by the word of one influential boy. That Chester had an influence he could well believe. It took all his courage to go to the school and face Chester again. Knowing what his own feelings would be in Chester's place, he could not expect forgiveness. He went to please his mother, but he counted upon the worst experience of his life. "I 'll stand it as long as I can," he said to himself at last; "then I 'll get out."

He went to his room. A lean, tall boy detained him. "My name is Joe Taylor—'Jeremy,' they call me. I 've heard of you from Chester Fiske. My room is near yours; if I can do anything for you, let me know."

Marshall stammered in surprise. The lean student left him as another boy approached. "I 'm

Stukeley, the baseball captain," said this one. "Chester Fiske says you can play good ball. You must try for the nine. Practice begins on Monday."

Marshall could scarcely believe his ears. "They are fooling me," he thought. But Chester himself met him next, and held out his hand. He was evidently hurrying somewhere on an errand, but paused to say cordially, "Glad to see you, Marshall." Marshall sooner would have expected a blow in the face.

He went to his room. There was Ben Farley, lying on his back on the window-seat, playing on his harmonica. He nodded, but did not cease playing. Marshall sat down. He was sensitive to music; his room-mate was a skilful player. Ben drew from the harmonica strains as from a violin; he looked up into the corners of the ceiling dreamily, for he was an artist, and wandering chords breathed softly from his mouth. Ben looked like a cherub; Marshall for a moment felt like one. Marshall had received the pleasantest sensation of years. Chester meant to be good to him. He began to feel confidence in himself.

But presently Ben took the organ from his mouth and sat up. He still looked like a cherub, plump and cheerful.

"So," he remarked, "you and Chester Fiske are ancient enemies."

"What!" cried Marshall. The blow in the face had come.

He did not think Ben was guessing—romancing, rather. Ben was fond of twisting the truth into extravagances; this time he had stumbled on an unsuspected reality. Marshall was shrewd, but astonishment carried him away. He missed Ben's momentary look of surprise, then his delight. He saw only the mask that concealed them—innocence again.

"Why, yes," said Ben. "Some trouble you two had a year or two ago. What was it, anyway?"

"Why, he—he—" cried Marshall. He realized, in spite of sudden anger, that he had no accusation to make against Chester. "Nothing," he ended sullenly. "If Chester wants to talk, let him. I've nothing to say."

Ben's discovery lacked completeness. "Oh, well," he said, feeling his way, "he did n't say much—just hinted round. Rather mean of him, I think. Now if you'd speak up and tell your side, we could confute him."

"Confute!" said Marshall, bitterly. "I've nothing to confute."

Ben sprang up and struck an attitude. "I see," he said, "there is some mystery here!" He paced the floor, frowning and nodding, then came and put a hand on Marshall's shoulder. "Never mind," he said. "Cheer up, my boy. Are we not room-mates? I will stand or fall with you!"

"Thank you," said Marshall, dejectedly. His mood was dark again, and his perceptions dulled. Had he been himself he would have perceived Ben's theatric gestures and phrases, and have recognized the actor in the boy. Ben's artistic blood led him to constant mummery; he was always pretending, even to himself. But Marshall did not see.

"Ha!" said Ben, pausing. "What 's that? Hist!"

"Nothing," answered Marshall.

"I cannot be mistaken," said Ben. "Listen!"

Marshall listened. There were noises in the corridor—the sound of tiptoeing feet, whisperings, gigglings, and a suppressed cough. Ben sped to the door and put a shoulder against it. He turned to Marshall a face as white as at impending danger. "Fly!" he whispered.

Marshall rose, puzzled. "What is it?"

"The Third Class!" answered Ben, horror-

stricken. "When a new boy comes, if the class next below can catch him before he can put his hand on the chapel knocker for sanctuary, they can claim a treat all round, or make him sing a song at supper. They 've come"—he paused and gasped—"for you! There is no escape."

"The chapel knocker?" asked Marshall. The chapel was at the very end of the long row of buildings. He looked out. The window was some distance from the frozen ground, but he opened it. "Let them come in," he said.

Ben stepped away from the door. A moment, and the handle turned slowly. Then the door opened quickly. A dozen boys, members of the Third Class, were clustered at the threshold.

"Boys," cried Ben, in earnest sadness, "I beg of you—"

"Oh, shut up, Ben!" said they.

Marshall sat on the window-seat. "You want me?" he asked.

"It's the custom of the school—" began the leader. But Marshall slipped out of the window on to the broad gutter. The house had a French roof, and on the window-ledge a boy could walk with safety. The boys made a rush after him. Then, as Marshall started for the next window, it

opened, and grinning heads appeared. Boys were before and behind. He was trapped.

But he was in no mood to yield. He looked at the roof above him, but the sloping sides were so steep he could not climb to it. He looked down, and saw a spout descending. The boys, clambering after him, were close at hand. He sat down near the spout, grasped the gutter, and swung himself into space.

The boys cried out in alarm. Marshall did not heed. It was easy for him to hang with one hand for an instant, seize the spout, and lower himself upon it. The spout was stout and bore him. He climbed down it quickly, while the boys, with craning necks and bated breath, watched him from above. He reached the ground, cast no glance behind, and walked deliberately to the chapel. There he touched the knocker and turned back. A group of the First Class boys met him.

"Where did you learn to do that?" they asked him.

"On board ship," he answered, and turned away from them. He was not in a sociable frame of mind, and seeing before him the sunset and a quiet path, he pulled his cap from his pocket, set it on his head, and walked away by himself, leaving groups of the boys looking after him.

Among them Ben Farley craned his neck from the window with a curiosity greater than the rest. Curiosity was, in fact, Ben's special weakness. He had an overmastering desire to pry into private affairs, and when once he had discovered one he was keen in studying it out. To this particular employment Ben brought an amount of industry that would better have been employed in other matters; the very hint of something concealed would make him fidget for days in the endeavor to find it out, as boys knew who wished to tease him. Just now he found himself on the scent of a real mystery, something of importance to Marshall, and all his faculties were awake with the desire to master the secret. He could not rest until he saw Chester Fiske, and at once seeking him out, watched an opportunity and drew him aside.

"Did you see Marshall climb down the spout?" he asked. "Did n't he do it well?"

"I did n't see him," answered Chester. "It was a hard thing to do, but he always was a good athlete."

"Kind of an all-round athlete?" asked Ben. "Good in everything, was n't he?"

"Indeed he was," agreed Chester, and smiled at his recollections. "He gave me enough trouble once."

Ben's heart beat faster, but he inquired carelessly: "How was that?"

"Why," explained Chester, "it was at a camp where we were, a summer camp. We had sports, competing for a cup, and it was about as close between Marshall and me as it well could be."

"Who won?" asked Ben, promptly—too promptly, for Chester looked at him and began to smile. Here was a chance to tease Ben.

"We both won," he said. "Therefore the Cup was given to number three."

"Oh, go on," retorted Ben. "You can't fool me. Who won, Chester?"

"To tell the truth, Ben," answered Chester, who began to feel that perhaps it was like boasting to speak more of the Cup, and so still put Ben off, "neither won, and so everybody scrambled for it, and it was smashed." He started to turn away.

"But see here," persisted Ben, detaining him, "you and Marshall were n't on very good terms, were you?"

Chester was surprised; he turned and looked Ben over as he asked: "He has n't said so, has he?"

"I understood him so," replied Ben.

"Well," said Chester, as he began to move away,

"we were n't exactly intimate, but I hope he has nothing against me; I have nothing against him."

But Ben saw that he was very serious, and his curiosity increased. There was something between the two; there must be quite a story to it. Perhaps he could work some more information out of Marshall by means of what he had gained from Chester. He went back to his room, restless with the desire to know.

The March evening closed in. From his lonely walk, where every thought was bitter, and where homesickness began to oppress him, Marshall was called back to the school by the ringing of the bell for roll-call. He went with the others to the great school-room, answered to his name, and took the seat assigned to him. He saw that many boys, big and little, looked at him with interest, pointing him out to each other. He was a new boy; he had performed an astonishing feat. But Marshall thought only of Chester Fiske and what he might have said. The assignments of classes were given out, various notices were read, and then the boys were called to supper. His neighbors at table tried to scrape acquaintance with him. He was unresponsive. "They just want," he thought, "to see what I'll say."

The evening was to be spent in putting the rooms in order. Now not only had Marshall himself acquired celebrity, but, thanks to Ben, his baseball equipment as well. Their room during the evening was a place for frequent visits; boys came in to see Marshall, and to handle his things. He received them without cordiality, almost indifferently, and with few words. Some of the boys, admiring his mask, his varied gloves, his bats, asked leave to use them—sometimes. “You may use them whenever you please,” he answered listlessly. They thought him a silent fellow, but that only served to interest them in him the more. He was strong, as they knew; he was handsome, with the look in his face of energy and repression. Marshall had had so many experiences in his life that they had marked his features with the evidence of force and self-reliance. Eyes that were searching, a line between the brows, and a mouth that shut tight, detracted somewhat from his good looks, but they added largely to the interest of his face. Therefore the boys felt the wish to know him better. But the very signs of his strength made them hesitate to be familiar, and checked at the outset the progress of acquaintance.

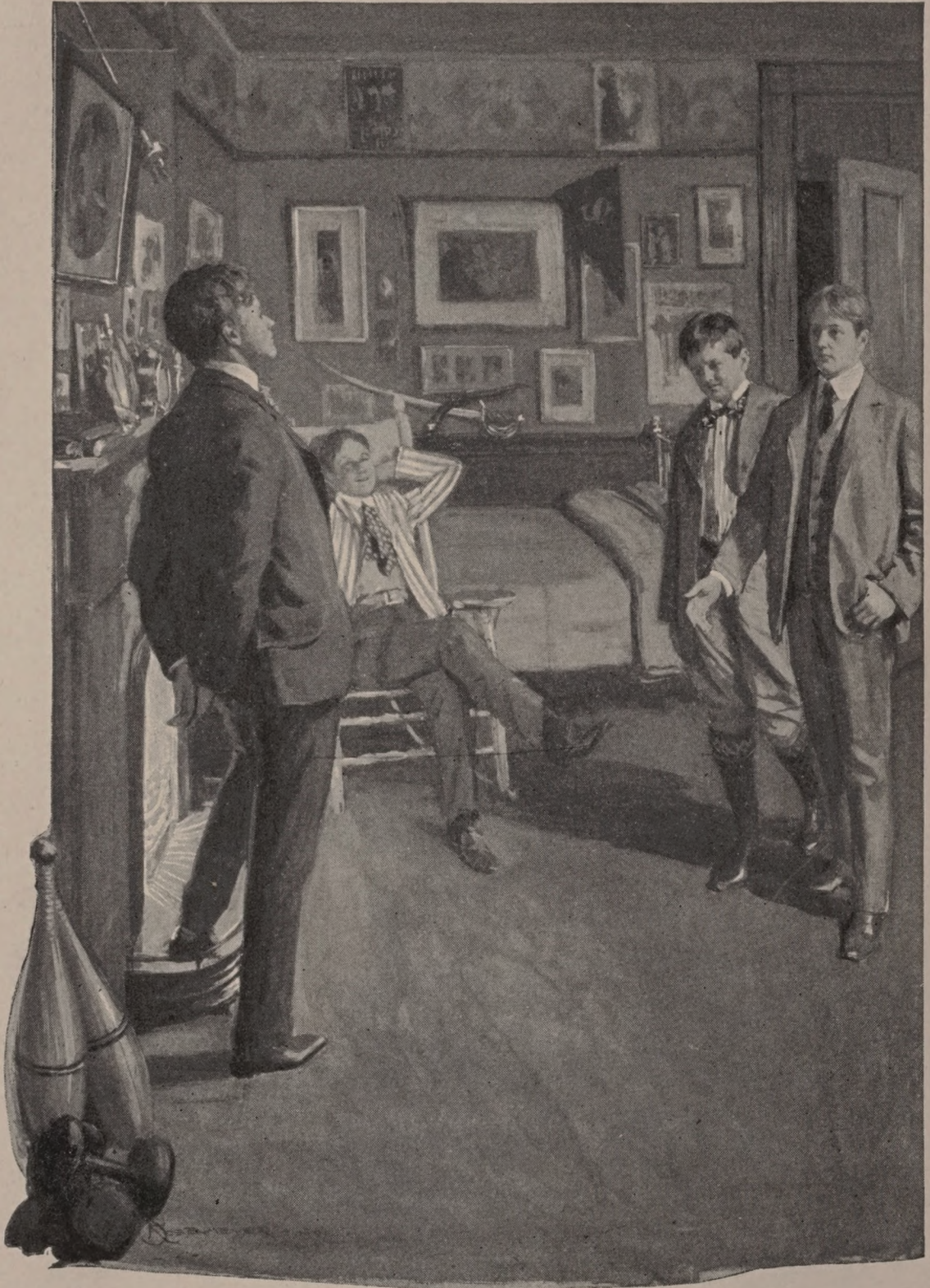
After a while Marshall was left alone with Ben, and Ben began again on his inquiry, backward, as caution bade him. "Marshall," he said, "I was talking with Chester just before supper, and he said that at that summer camp—where was it, anyway?"

A flush of anger came on Marshall's face. The whole school, presently, would know it all. He rose abruptly from his seat. "Ben," he said, "let's not speak of this again."

"But—" hesitated Ben, in disappointment.

"I mean what I say," stated Marshall, and so sternly that Ben was silent. He looked furtively at Marshall where he stood by the mantel, and the depth of his room-mate's emotion only pricked his curiosity the more. He called patience to his aid, and resolved to wait; but some day or other, he said to himself, the secret should be his. Meanwhile in the corridor more footsteps were heard, and Marshall's dying flush revived as he said to himself, with irritation: "More visitors?" In answer, Chester and Rawson appeared in the doorway.

Marshall's aspect did not encourage them to enter, as he stood without a word. But Ben sprang up at once, and cried: "Come in!" This



"CHESTER AND RAWSON APPEARED IN THE DOORWAY."

would be fun for him; it was just what he wanted. Chester and Rawson entered.

"Well, Marshall," said Chester, cheerfully, "so you 've come to Stonefield."

"Yes," answered Marshall, shortly; "I 've come."

His aspect was discouraging, as he stood without budging, his hands behind his back, and neither offered welcome nor invited them to a chair. Chester felt the inhospitality, but went on.

"I 'm glad you 've come," he said. "I came to say that if I can help you—"

"You 'll be quite willing to?" interrupted Marshall.

There was a sneer in his voice that surprised Chester. The difference in Marshall, moreover, from what he had been two years before, was making itself felt. It was the same face, but stronger and less handsome; the same voice, but more abrupt and resolute. There showed an increase of strength in Marshall's character, but whether for good or ill was not quite plain. The question, too, seemed to have a doubtful purpose, and Chester answered, puzzled:

"Why, yes."

"You 've been helping me already," acknowledged Marshall, briefly; "I 'm much obliged."

"Indeed?" inquired Chester, blank.

Suddenly Marshall pointed to the door. "And you can continue to help me all you please," he said, "on the other side of that sill. I will undertake, Chester, to get along without you in the school."

"Marshall!" cried Chester, astonished.

"You, too, Rawson," added Marshall.

Chester struggled with anger. Rawson took him by the arm. "Come along, Chester," he said, and led him out of the room. With grim satisfaction, Marshall watched them go.

CHAPTER X



HESTER was correct in his conclusion that Marshall was no longer his former self. The lad was changed indeed. Still capable of strong resentments, as we have seen, he was less self-confident and more humble.

Had Ben been awake on that first night, he could have gathered much from the sounds from Marshall's bed. Marshall tossed and could not sleep, caught his head in his hands, thought of the past, and groaned. The word "Mother!" came often from his lips, as if begging forgiveness. Then, "Why did I do it?" and "I was mean to you, Chester." Then, finally: "I promised mother. I'll be as patient as I can."

Marshall drew a long breath, quieted himself, and began to think collectedly. His most recent experience was his mother's illness, when his expulsion from his last school, coming at a time when she was very weak, plunged her into brain-

fever. He still shuddered at the thought that her death would have been his fault. Sitting at her bedside, he had learned from her delirious speech how deeply his escapades had wounded her. One sudden cry, "Marshall, you are killing me!" rang in his ears for days. Her recovery he regarded as a reprieve, a chance given him to reform. He came to the school with a deeply-rooted purpose to do better.

Then he thought of Chester, and turned in upon himself the light of frankest self-criticism. Again he shuddered. He remembered every incident at the camp, how first he had had Chester's friendship, and then lost it. That loss and Chester's horror at him—the pure-minded boy starting away from him—had stung Marshall into a series of acts that he never could think upon without the deepest shame. Had ever one boy been so mean to another? How natural for Chester to wish revenge!

And yet how strange it was to think that Chester had made that summer a turning-point in Marshall's life! For of all the boys Marshall ever knew, no other had forced from him such unwilling admiration. Of all his enmities, and he had had many, none ever filled his mind with such

regrets. He carried away with him from camp the memory of Chester. He remembered, in spite of himself, the purity of Chester's standards. Constantly he found himself criticizing his own actions in the light of what Chester would have thought. He dreaded to meet the other again; but when he saw him he realized anew how much he had lost with his friendship. His anger passed; the thought came to Marshall that this was a punishment, and a proper one, for all he had done that was bad. "I deserve it," he said aloud. "But oh, if Chester only knew that I have never been bad, never really bad, since the camp! Mischievous—yes, and fond of scrapes; but never again like that."

But if this were punishment, he told himself, he ought to bear it. If he could restrain himself from passionate outbursts, could be patient, perhaps he could show Chester that he was changed. That would be worth while, worth working for. And Marshall made his resolve. "I will hold out," he said, "so long as any one stands by me." Then, with a last thought of his mother, he turned on his side and slept.

On the following Monday the baseball squad assembled in the gymnasium. Big boys and little boys, tall and short, thin or square, some thirty in

all, put on their clothes for the preliminary training. Stukeley was there, and Jeremy Taylor; Chester and Rawson, and more whom Marshall did not know. He felt that he was a mark for many glances. Thin Jeremy came and surveyed him openly. "Well!" he said, "look at that, now!"

"What?" asked Marshall.

Jeremy called Stukeley. "Look at this fellow's arms and chest," he said. "No wonder he could climb down that spout!"

Stukeley felt of Marshall as of a horse. "No wonder," he agreed. "I understand it now. You're in good training, Marshall. But were n't you a little stiff after that?"

"Oh, no." Marshall felt pleasure at their admiration. Other boys, coming closer, nudged and spoke among themselves. He heard one sentence: "I tell you, he's an athlete."

Practice began. The gymnasium instructor divided the boys into squads, and at chest-weights, dumb-bells, and the running-track they began the work of the year. Marshall, inspirited by the feeling in his favor, joined with the rest with vigor. At the end of an hour the work was finished. Stukeley called the boys together and took their

names. Then he asked the positions they were trying for.

They answered as they chose.

"Jeremy?"

"Nothing."

"Chester?"

"Anything." Some of the others called, "Catcher."

Stukeley smiled; he was catcher himself.

"Sorry, Chester," he said.

Chester laughed. "Never mind," he answered.

"Rawson?"

"Short-stop." And the boys applauded. Rawson was infallible.

"What," said Stukeley, presently, "no pitcher? Here 's Jack Bray. Pitcher, Jack? All right. Now I must have a substitute."

But no one else said "Pitcher" until the last, when Marshall's name was called. He said "Pitcher" boldly. Jack Bray turned and looked at him critically, but the rest of the boys murmured approval.

"Good," said Stukeley, decidedly. "You have an arm for it. Well, every day at the same hour, for the rest of the term."

So began Marshall's school year, in some respects

favorably. He possessed two elements of popularity, evident strength of character, and athletic powers. His split with Chester was not really known. Yet he thought it was, which caused him to keep to himself. And Ben was at hand, still ready to stir up trouble.

Let us be just to Ben, and recognize that his mischief-making was comparatively innocent, or, at least, that it was thoughtless. But the heedless maker of trouble is often more deadly than the deliberate, and this Ben should have known. A greedy devourer of novels, delighting in the old-style stories crammed full of villains, Ben of all boys ought to have been familiar with the results of prying into private matters. But it often happens that the reader does not apply to life the principles which may be gleaned from books, and Ben regarded the romantic atmosphere of his favorite authors as far removed from life at school. If Ernesto in the novel brought endless troubles upon Rodrigo by not minding his own business, that seemed no reason why Ben Farley should not have as good a time as he pleased with Marshall Moore's secrets. And Ben should have considered that he brought to his pursuit trained faculties which other boys did not possess. Sent into the

world with a genius for acting, he was constantly playing little parts all by himself, going around with his head in a cloud, enacting mysterious dramas. He had so often invited ridicule, in the school and out, that he had learned to accommodate himself to circumstances and conceal his pastimes from other boys. With such a skill as this, he had Marshall, who was quite unused to him, completely at his mercy.

Thus, in the character of the Benevolent Friend, he welcomed Marshall on his first return from the baseball practice. "Aha, my boy," he cried, in literary phrase, "how went the day?" He listened to Marshall's account of the work, and nodded his head at the conclusion. "All goes well," he said wisely. "We shall be able to disregard Chester's latest insinuations."

Marshall cried at once: "What! has he been saying anything more?"

And Ben answered, as one who would shield another from unpleasantness: "Oh, nothing to speak of."

Ben could do this so well that sometimes he could deceive those who were well used to him. Marshall was new to it. He went silently and got out his books.

For a while he sat thinking, unable to fix his mind upon his work. He saw in daylight the difficulty of what had seemed easy in the dark. He had felt the pleasure of being with the other boys, of sharing their pursuits and working with them for the same object. It was harder to be cut off from them than it had seemed that other night; Chester had less justification for revenge. And if Chester kept on speaking against him, it would be difficult to bear it long. But at present there was nothing to do, and, with the sensitiveness of a boy who had many times failed, Marshall determined to withdraw into himself. It was a hard conclusion to arrive at; he was sociable and loved good times. But he saw no other thing to do, and at last he braced himself firmly, refused to think again either of the past or of the future, and resolved to work as for his life. While Ben sat reading the "Mysteries of Udolpho," Marshall began on his lessons in earnest.

From that day he followed his routine. In so doing he was accomplishing more than ever before in his life. "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city." For the first time in his life Marshall was ruling himself.

He had never cared for books; he had never

bound himself to regular hours; he had never, among boys, submitted to authority. But now he studied his lessons — not without groans, but he studied them; now he was punctual at his classes and observant of all the school rules; and now he was Stukeley's loyal and obedient servant, submitting patiently to the drudgery of training.

A dozen times he would read his Latin lines, to make sure of the sense. After studying his History he would shut the book and try to memorize. His mathematics were the worst. Often, after thirty minutes' patient work, they were still a mere jumble of figures, and in class his failures were frequent. Ben could never help him in his studying; rather, he interrupted frequently. "See here," Ben would suddenly break in. "Listen! here 's a duel between Hortensio and Bellarmine." "No, no!" Marshall would cry. His duel was with his mathematics. At last, in despair one day, he remembered Jeremy, and carried the book to his room. "I say," he said pathetically, at the door, "I can't make head or tail of this." Then matters were made clear. Jeremy knew how to straighten the worst tangle of a boy's brain. After that Marshall went to him frequently, and when he did not come often enough Jeremy sought him out.

It was hard for Marshall. To fix his attention, day after day, upon things he had always despised, was a severe test of his purpose. Even to follow the slow and mechanical evolutions of the baseball squad required self-control. To swing dumbbells when he might be flying on the rings, to pull at chest-weights when he saw the punching-bag idle, made him at times so restless that he could scarcely restrain himself. The things he was doing were stupid. It was not till later, when he saw their results, that he recognized their value. The things that he wished to do were fun, and he did not know that they tended to give him uneven development. But he stuck to his tasks, whether lessons or drill. His reward came when finally he worked himself into some enjoyment of his gymnasium work, and when his mother, receiving the report of his studies for the first month, wrote to praise him.

One thing surprised him—that Chester was steadily kind. For when Rawson, himself angry enough, brought away from Marshall's room Chester boiling with rage, the two had the wisdom to shut themselves in their own study and wait till their feelings cooled. Rawson was the first to say: "We promised his mother," and Chester, after a

full minute's pause: "Then we 'll keep the promise!" Not understanding Marshall's reason for his action, they supposed it was because he still laid up against them the losing of the Cup. "Yet we 'll never say or do a single thing against him," they declared solemnly—no easy resolve after such an insult. But Rawson remarked: "It 's going to be mighty hard to help him if he acts like this."

Therefore, according to agreement, and with Mrs. Moore in their minds, they spoke to him always pleasantly, and did no more than to avoid provoking another outburst against them, which, if it were public, they knew would injure him. For their position was secure in the school, Marshall's was yet to be won, and anything he said against them would be to his own hurt.

Mr. Holmes questioned Chester one day. "Marshall, I see, does not let you be very intimate with him," he remarked. "Does he still have a prejudice against you?"

Chester wondered at the master's keenness in noticing so small a matter among so many boys. "Yes, sir," he answered regretfully; "I am afraid he does. But Rawson and I are doing our best, sir."

Mr. Holmes knew of Marshall's work in class

and training, and was satisfied. "Well," he said, "keep on trying. The signs are good. Remember, Chester, it is a fight worth winning."

Chester went and reported the words to Rawson, to the great encouragement of them both.

To tell the plain truth, however, Mr. Holmes was somewhat puzzled. He saw Marshall, not upon the easy path which had been prepared for him, but walking a hard and thorny one alone. Somewhere something had gone wrong, but he knew it would be useless to inquire, so plainly was Chester in the dark, and so stubbornly would Marshall declare, if questioned, that everything was right. Long ago had he encountered Marshall's reticence, which made it hard to reach him. Mr. Holmes made up his mind, therefore, merely to watch, thankful, to judge from the growing signs of purpose on Marshall's face, that the discipline was improving him. "Events are taking their own course," he thought, "but perhaps in the end their way will prove better than mine."

Marshall, in the meanwhile, had one little controversy with his room-mate. One day Ben, with great secrecy, showed Marshall a package of cigarettes. "If you take a stroll with me this evening after dark," he said, "we can have a smoke."

Marshall regarded him steadily. "See here, Ben," he said. "I 've smoked a hundred times. I 've broken the rule against smoking in half a dozen schools. Every time I 've got caught and punished. It does n't pay, Ben."

Ben was crestfallen. "But it 's such fun," he said.

Marshall had a new feeling, and new thoughts. "I don't think it 's fun, Ben," he said slowly. "It 's against the rule in every school I ever heard of; therefore it looks as if the rule were good. And let me tell you this. In other schools I did it sometimes to spite the masters; but here, where Mr. Holmes trusts us and the masters are n't spying every minute, I don't see the fun in deceiving them. We 're upon honor; we hurt our own selves if we prove we can't be trusted. Put away the cigarettes."

Ben put them away on that occasion, but he used them later. Marshall smelled tobacco in his clothes one day. "You 've been smoking, Ben," he said.

"Well, if I have?" demanded Ben.

"You won't learn by my experience?" asked Marshall. "Well, go ahead and learn by your own." It would have been well for Marshall if

Ben's manner of learning had not involved his room-mate in trouble.

Time passed along. The baseball squad was sifted down to eighteen members. Then Stukeley called them together one day after gymnasium, and announced that on the morrow the training-table would begin. He stated the rules briefly: "After this it's to be understood that we're on strict training. We're to eat only what they give us at the table. No soda nor tonics are to be bought at the store. Of course, no beer nor spirits, and no smoking. And though nothing of the sort will happen, any boy breaking the rules will be sent away from the table, and will lose his chance of the nine."

The next day the training-table was set in the dining-room. The picked boys sat at it and were served with special food. Marshall, as he took his place with the rest, felt happy. A few days afterward, the ground being clear of snow, outdoor practice began. Then it began to be seen for what positions Stukeley destined the boys.

He himself was catcher. The bases went to First Class boys. Jeremy was to play in the field. Of members of the Second Class, Rawson was short-stop, Chester was left-field. Right-field was

not yet settled. But as for pitcher, Stukeley put Marshall there in the first practice game, saying: "We 'll try you." Jack Bray pitched on the second nine, but Marshall had no fear of him.

He had never been beaten in any competition—never except once. Whenever he thought of that time his ears tingled; whenever he saw Chester Fiske he thought of it. But Chester, in that great race so long ago, had not beaten Marshall—not Chester alone. Marshall's conscience had beaten him. On sudden temptation he had done an unworthy thing; his heart had failed him at the thought of it; he had left the field almost fainting. But now, in a fair struggle, he meant to win. And he pitched so well, studied his art so earnestly, trained so steadily, that the hope of Stonefield centered on him for the great game against the Woodstock School. For, of all the positions, that of pitcher is perhaps the most important.

So more days passed, and life grew brighter, happier, and easier for Marshall. But one evening, when he went to his room, Ben greeted him with a piece of news that took him off his feet: "Stukeley is going away!"

"Going away?" repeated Marshall, in astonishment.

"Yes," answered Ben, satisfied with the effect he had produced, but leading up to the more startling item that was to follow. "His father has lost money, and has sent for him to come home. But what do you think Stukeley means to do?"

Marshall had no idea.

"He means," said Ben, impressively, "to make Chester Fiske captain in his place!"

"How do you know?" demanded Marshall, with a sudden sinking of the heart.

"Oh, I heard," answered Ben, wisely. "I heard." He did not say he *overheard*. "It 's not announced yet, but it 's true. And now, Marshall, how about your pitching on the nine? Chester 's very chummy, you know, with Jack Bray."

"I know," responded Marshall. He began to realize how much his ambition was bound up in the nine.

"Well," sighed Ben, "it 's hard to overcome an enmity, is n't it? But cheer up; perhaps it is n't so bad as we fear."

On the morrow Stukeley called the team together, and announced that he was summoned home. "I sha'n't come back," he said, trying to conceal his feeling. "You must elect another captain in my place. And I wish to give you my advice, which is to elect Chester Fiske. He—"

"Hold on!" cried Chester, starting up.

"Put him out!" ordered Jeremy. Jack Bray dragged Chester back to his seat. "Shut up, Chester," said they all.

"But Jeremy should be captain," argued Chester.

"Thank you," retorted Jeremy; "as if I had n't enough work to do!" Jeremy edited the school paper.

"But I—" A hand was put on Chester's mouth, and Stukeley proceeded:

"Chester knows my ideas and my system. It is a little unusual to have a Second Class boy captain. But Chester is the best player, has a good head, and I think should have the place."

Chester struggled free. "But I say—" They cut him short. "Stop your noise, Chester. We 're going to vote." With good-natured chaff, ballots were prepared and handed round. Marshall, resigned, wrote Chester's name on his. Stukeley collected the ballots, read them, and declared Chester captain.


"Now we shall see!" said Ben, with many shakings of the head. "But I greatly fear, Marshall my boy, that things will now go wrong."

On the following day Stukeley went away, and Chester entered upon his duties. When on that very afternoon Marshall found himself playing

second-base on the second nine, with Jack Bray pitching on the first, Ben's prophecy seemed true. "There," said Ben to him after practice, "I told you so!"

Marshall had but one resource. He said nothing.

CHAPTER XI

“F you don't beat Woodstock this year," Stukeley had said to the team, when he left, "don't let me ever see one of you again. Three years running they 've beaten us now. I meant to give them one good drubbing before I graduated. You must do it for me."

The responsibility was therefore on Chester's shoulders to win the great game of the year. Captain while still in the Second Class! It was an unusual honor, and an unusual weight of work. Mr. Holmes was glad to see that the lad took his responsibility seriously—so seriously, however, that he left unexplained his reason for fulfilling Ben's prediction.

"I would shake the teams up for a few days," had been Stukeley's parting advice to the new captain. "Change the positions about. The boys will get stale, especially Marshall. He 's been using his arm too much. Don't let him pitch

again till next week." Chester, busy with many things, neglected to inform Marshall of the reason of the change. This was the real beginning of Marshall's troubles.

They followed closely on. In the first game with an outside team, one from a city school, Marshall pitched, indeed, but not to his satisfaction. The game was lost; he had been batted heavily. Chester laughed when it was over. "Don't you care, Marshall. They were too much for us anyway. It was n't your fault. They were all older than we." But Marshall saw that Chester was really disappointed in losing his first game. He had caught faultlessly, but Marshall could not forget his own two wild pitches. He dreamed of them that night, and awoke in anguish as he imagined a steady stream of runners, passing from third to home.

Something more real came next day. As Marshall was going to the store for shoe-lacings, Ben, from his customary position on the window-seat, asked him a favor. "Buy me some cigarettes," he said.

"Look here, Ben," said Marshall, "do you expect me to buy your tobacco for you, when I don't approve of your smoking?"

"You need n't be so smart," answered Ben. "Mr. Hunnewell asked me to get some for him to use this evening."

Now Mr. Hunnewell was the English teacher, and a special protector of Ben's. Ben amused and interested him; he took pains to defend him before the other masters. "The boy is clever," he declared. "He's got quite a literary turn. Who knows but his artistic story-telling may make him a great author some day!"

Mr. Holmes, laughing, quoted the old rhyme:

"'For there may be some great men before us,'
Quoth worthy old Master Treborius."

But Mr. Hunnewell continued to defend Ben, maintaining that even his curiosity might prove to be the instinct for observation which is planted in many writers. His friendship for Ben was known to the school, as was also known his fondness for tobacco. It did not seem so very unnatural, therefore, that he should have made such a request of Ben. Marshall, not realizing that a master would never have made such a request of a boy, and overlooking one other smaller matter, was satisfied. "All right," he said, and went away on his two errands.

Now the store was a place of many nooks and corners, and a boy who went there for forbidden things was wise to make sure who was there before he stated his wishes. When Marshall boldly asked for the cigarettes, the storekeeper indicated caution, spoke in a low tone, and gave him his package hastily. Marshall, who saw no one, and would not have done differently if he had, smiled and left the shop. But he had not gone half-way on his return when he heard his name called, and turning, was confronted by Chester and Rawson.

Both had been hurrying, were short of breath and pale. Marshall saw that their changed appearance was from excitement as well as exertion. He thought of the cigarettes in his pocket, and grew pale himself. "Well?" he demanded.

Rawson left the matter to Chester. Chester hesitated before he spoke; but he said finally: "We were in the store when you bought the cigarettes. We could n't help hearing."

Marshall was still sore from his recent failure to win the game. "Well?" he asked again.

"I think," said Chester, mildly, "that you 'd do better to give those cigarettes to me."

Marshall drew them from his pocket and handed

them to Chester. "What will you do with them?" he asked.

There was in his voice a challenge to destroy them. Chester was no boy to fail in his duty. Just beyond the road ran a brook, and he tossed the package in. "They are best there," he said, and waited for what Marshall would say.

Marshall still eyed him quietly. "What did you do that for?" he inquired.

"Oh, Marshall," said Chester, reproachfully, "when you are a member of the nine!"

Marshall's anger began to burn. "I know too much," he said, "to suppose that I'll ever be a member of the nine."

"What do you mean?" demanded Chester, quickly.

"Oh, Marshall!" cried Rawson. "Shame!"

"And besides," went on Marshall, unyielding, "those cigarettes were not for me, but for somebody else."

The others were taken aback. They looked at each other. "But if you were bringing tobacco into the school—" began Chester.

"You had no business to interfere, if I was."

"For another boy," Chester went on weakly. He saw that he had done wrong.

"It was not for another boy," cried Marshall. "Now what will you say? It was for a master."

They stared at him, unbelieving, all their suspicions again aroused. He saw, and flushed. "It was for Mr. Hunnewell," he said.

"Oh!" cried Rawson. "Oh, Mr. Hunnewell never smokes cigarettes. Why, he's said to the boys, 'Smoke a pipe if you must smoke, but never cigarettes'!"

Marshall knew that it was true. He had heard the words himself. This was the smaller matter which he had forgotten. His mouth opened, but he could utter no sound. Dismay came into his face. Quickly he turned and left them. He knew that they stood still in the same place, and he felt that they believed him a liar.

"Well," said Rawson, presently, in a low voice, "how can we help him if he acts so?"

"Wait," answered Chester. "Sit down here." They sat on the wall by the brook, watching Marshall's hurrying figure. "Rawson," Chester said again presently, "there is something queer in this—"

"Decidedly queer," interrupted Rawson.

"Let me finish. I am inclined to think that Marshall believed those cigarettes were for Mr. Hunnewell."

"Oh, come now!" Rawson looked at Chester, who, still watching Marshall, was thoughtfully tapping the ground with his foot. Such charity was astonishing. "You don't mean it."

"I do," answered his chum. "When he said the tobacco was for a master, he meant it. And I was frightened then, I can tell you, at interfering where I had no business."

"Yes," admitted Rawson, doubtfully.

"So I think we 'd better forget this matter. And as soon as I see Marshall I shall beg his pardon."

But Marshall, almost desperate, went straight to Ben. "Ben!" he cried,—and his room-mate was startled at his face,—“did you really want those cigarettes for Mr. Hunnewell?”

Ben was frightened enough to tell the truth. "No," he stammered.

"For yourself, then?"

"Why—yes."

"Then," — and Marshall sat down and dropped his face in his hands,—“you have got me into trouble!”

"Why, I did n't expect you would believe me. I winked." Ben almost wailed. He asked what was the matter. Marshall would say nothing.

"Oh, oh!" cried Ben, and in tragic despair he wrung his hands.

Marshall waited in silence. He expected Chester to come soon and say: "You are dropped from the training-table." He could not shield himself by naming Ben. One can no more tell on a boy to another than to a master. Sure enough, there was a knock at the door, and Chester entered.

Marshall shivered, and stood up. Chester hesitated on seeing Ben. Marshall spoke: "Well, I'll go."

"Where?" asked Chester. Ben listened open-mouthed.

"Back to the Second Class table."

"Nonsense!" and Chester smiled. "I came to say I'm sorry I was so hasty, and to pay you for the cigarettes."

"What!" cried Marshall.

"You will excuse me, won't you, Marshall? And here is the money." Chester laid it upon the table. He wished to say more. This was his opportunity to explain everything, to become friends. Both boys were deeply moved. It was the opportunity—if gaping Ben had not been there. Chester said nothing but "Good day," and went away.

"Well, upon my soul!" cried Ben, as soon as

the door had closed. "What has he to do, I'd like to know, with you, or my cigarettes? He took them, did he?" Ben was injured. "He'd better ask pardon. Why did n't he give them back? What did you give them up for?"

"I can't tell you," answered Marshall. Ben teased and begged, but got no answer, till he was wild with curiosity. Then he grew cross.

"Well," he said sulkily, "you are easy on Chester, but I'll tell you what, he is n't easy on you. You don't tell things, but he does!"

"Does he still tell things about me?" faltered Marshall.

"Of course he does." Ben had diverted attention from his own offense so successfully that he had forgotten it himself. He brought out a damaging piece of evidence. "About that Cup that you competed for."

Marshall winced. "What does he say?" he asked.

"You don't suppose"—and Ben's tone was now one of patient suffering—"that the boys tell me what is said? No, Marshall; they know I would not stand it, and so tell me nothing. But they're whispering all the time—I don't know what." Ben finished with an impression vaguely dreadful.

He started to leave the room, but turned back, trying once more to make Marshall tell his secret. "If you would only speak up for yourself, why, we could do a lot for you. Plenty of fellows like you."

"I 've nothing to say," answered Marshall, in dejection.

Ben patted him kindly on the shoulder. "Well, I 'm sorry," he said. "If you won't help yourself, we can't do anything for you, can we?" He left the room, having shifted all blame from himself, leaving Marshall in pain. "Oh," cried Marshall, when he was alone, "you can't escape, you can't escape from the things you 've done! Will everything I 've done follow me always?"

But his persecutions ceased again for a time. If this were not a story of his mishaps, the jokes of the school, the jollifications, and Marshall's real good times might be told. He forgot himself frequently and made merry; he no longer had the feeling that the masters, as in his other schools, were "down on him." About as strange to him as anything was his progress in his studies. Two things he noticed: one, that he liked to study more; the other, that the work seemed easier. It was true that he took refuge in his books when his troubles pressed upon him. But aside from that,

Marshall was discovering for himself what other boys have learned before—that doing duty begets the love for duty, and the more we work, the more we like it.

“If there were no tasks in the world!” groaned Ben one night.

“Ah, but there are!” said Jeremy, smiling.

Yet everything was not over for Marshall. He worked faithfully and received good marks. He learned, finally, from Chester’s frequent admonitions not to use his arm too much, and from the fact that he was called upon to pitch in every match game, the reason why he was occasionally sent to the second nine, and he began to feel sure that the position of pitcher was his. Yet luck was still against him. So one might say, and yet, as once with Chester long before, it was a direct consequence of trusting too much to his companion Ben. Former events were revenging themselves, teaching to Marshall Chester’s own hard lesson.

But Ben, aside from all the trouble he was making for Marshall, gave him good times of another sort, and actually won his affection. Ben was, in truth, a delightful fellow. He could play on the harmonica, could sing to the banjo—and songs, as well, of his own making. Boys often came to the

room to "get Ben going," when jokes, comic songs, or absurdly extravagant stories would keep the room in laughter. Ben was a generous boy, too. Mr. Hunnewell was proud of him; the masters joked with him; and Jeremy demanded once a month a contribution to the school paper, which was considered by the school incomplete if not graced by something signed "B. F." Ben's particular weaknesses, therefore, of curiosity, pretense, and "manliness," were easy to be overlooked in the good companion. Yet the last of these faults was the next thing that brought Marshall into trouble.

Ben waited for his room-mate one day after baseball practice. "Come on," he said; "let's take a walk. Let's go down to the village." So Marshall and he went off together.

They passed through the village, and came to a path that led down into the valley of a little stream. Ben was about to enter upon it, but Marshall stopped. "Is n't this out of bounds?" he asked. "We'll be punished if we're caught."

"Oh, no," answered Ben. "Come on. See how lovely it is down here." It did look lovely below among the trees, and they went on. The path followed the stream, and the arching trees

that overhung, the sunbeams that streamed through the fresh foliage of the spring, were wonderful to Marshall's eyes. He lingered, but Ben urged him forward. "Oh, come on," said Ben. "I 'll show you something. There, see that?"

Before them, in a dell among mosses, stood a little mill, so old and weather-beaten that it seemed like a growth of the place. Water was rushing down a sluice, a great green wheel was turning, and the sound, the color, and the shadowed place, all were beautiful. "Come on," said Ben, and dragged Marshall to the door.

They entered the mill, open like a barn, and Marshall took his stand above the mill-race to watch the rushing water. A man came to answer Ben's call, and stood surveying the two boys.

Ben said something to him quietly.

"You don't want," said the man, "the stuff I keep. Mere boys like you!"

"Indeed!" answered Ben. "That 's my business, if you please. A glass at once, and here 's a quarter for it."

The man grumbled. "I don't know if I 'm justified in selling it to you." But he took the money and went away, presently returning with a glass

of amber-colored liquid in his hand. "Here," he said, "if you think you can venture to drink it."

Ben received it haughtily. "That 's all right," he said, and the man went away.

Marshall turned. "Ben," he asked, sniffing, "what 's that?"

"That?" responded Ben. "Oh, that 's apple-jack."

Marshall reached and took the glass. The smell of it was unmistakable. "That is whisky!" he declared.

Ben admitted it. "The man is a miller," he said. "He makes whisky of the corn. I want to see what it 's like." (Curiosity again!) "I heard some one say it was the finest—oh, Marshall, don't!"

Marshall was holding the glass over the sluice. "This is the best place for it," he said.

"Give it back!" cried Ben, angrily. "I 've paid for it."

Marshall unwillingly held his hand.

"Have some yourself," tempted Ben.

"And I on the nine?" retorted Marshall. "But Ben, you must n't drink this full strength; it will be too much for you. Pour out some, and fill up with water."



"THERE CHESTER AND HIS FRIEND SAT, HOLDING TO THE FLAGPOLE."

"Well," agreed Ben, "pour out some. I'll fetch a dipper for the water."

He went away, and Marshall poured a generous portion of the whisky into the sluice. Then, as he stood waiting for Ben, he lifted the glass to his face, and drew in the odor. He did not know that at that moment both fate and the warder-off of fate were coming toward him.

That afternoon it had happened that the two cronies, Chester and Rawson, had climbed to the top of the hill that stood within the school grounds. Upon its summit stood a summer-house whence one could see the view, but no school-boy had in years been content with that. The proper thing was to climb to its roof, and there Chester and his friend sat, holding to the flagpole, and rejoicing in the fact that they could see everything that went on within a mile. Near the school buildings the other boys looked small; farther away, in the village, the people were like dolls. The two watched Ben and Marshall as they wandered along the street. Then they saw them hesitate at the opening of the path. "That's out of bounds," said Rawson.

But boys, when mischievous, sometimes intentionally strayed; the two on the summer-house

were not shocked as the two in the valley disappeared in the path. They turned their eyes again to the village street, watching the idlers there, and thought no more of the others until they saw Mr. Holmes, with a quick step, go through the village and in his turn disappear in the path. Then they stared at each other. The path had but one ending; Marshall and Ben would be caught!

"Can't we warn them?" cried Rawson.

"I can try," answered Chester, promptly. He thought only of Marshall as he slipped to the ground and dashed down the hill. Rawson stayed; he could not keep up with Chester.

The way was all downhill; Chester had never run so fast in his life. He took the shortest way, across the fields; the pasture grass was firm to his feet, and he met no obstacles until he plunged into the wood at a point beyond the opening of the path. There, slipping, sliding, leaping, he made as straight as possible for the mill. He had but the thought to warn Marshall and save him the loss of a fortnight's recess. When he saw the mill before him he paused and looked back along the path. At a distance was Mr. Holmes, now lingering, like Marshall, above the brook. Chester took advantage of a thicket and dodged into the mill.

There before him was Marshall—but doing what? Chester saw the liquid in the glass, and remembered what he had recently heard of the making of whisky at the mill. The odor in the air was unmistakable. And Marshall, when he saw Chester, started and put down the glass.

Chester's face was strained, but as in duty bound he gave his warning: "Marshall, Mr. Holmes is coming. Run!"

They heard the sound of running feet. Ben had seen Mr. Holmes and fled. Marshall did not understand. "Why—" he began.

"This is out of bounds," said Chester, impatiently. "I saw you from the summer-house. Marshall, go!"

Surprised though Marshall was, he took the advice, and Chester followed him. Their darting figures left one door before Mr. Holmes entered at the other. Mr. Holmes came to arrange, and did arrange, a bargain by which the man agreed, for an annual payment, to sell no whisky to any member of the school. The man said nothing of the boys, and the fugitives got away safely. Chester sped up the hill; Marshall joined breathless Ben in the wood, and in haste they went back to the village. There Marshall turned to

Ben reproachfully. "That was out of bounds, after all."

"Well," admitted Ben, "so it was. But how could I tell that Mr. Holmes was coming there just then?"

"And you did n't warn me when you saw him!" added Marshall.

"There was n't time," answered Ben. "If he did n't see you, what do you care?"

Marshall said no more. He was disappointed in Ben. Had it not been for Chester he would have been in a fix; but, thanks to him, he had got off well.

So he thought; but, climbing wearily, Chester went back to Rawson on the hillside. "Were you in time?" asked Rawson, eagerly.

"Just."

"Then you 've done something for him, at any rate," said Rawson, with pleasure.

But Chester wished he had not gone. He supposed he had found Marshall drinking whisky, the most serious fault that a member of the nine could commit, for which he should be dropped from the team. Chester was captain. What was he to do?

CHAPTER XII



THAT evening, after supper, Marshall sought Chester and found him walking by himself. "Chester," he said, "I want to thank you for what you did this afternoon."

It was Chester's turn to receive the approach with coldness. He had been struggling with himself, remembering his promise to Mrs. Moore. Was Marshall now not going to admit his breach of the rules? "Is that all?" Chester asked.

"What else should I say?" inquired Marshall, in surprise.

"I found you drinking whisky," answered Chester.

"No!" cried the other. He turned white as he saw the situation. For the second time he found himself where he could not clear his name except by accusing Ben.

"Had n't you been drinking?" asked Chester.

"No; and I was n't going to."

"Very well." Chester felt disappointment deeper still. The fault was bad; the denial worse.

"You don't believe me?" asked Marshall.

"If you say so, I am bound to believe you."

A group of boys came to interrupt. Marshall went to his room, almost sick. Chester, as he went with the others, felt no better.

Marshall saw that he was in a hopeless tangle. When next he took his place at the training-table, where Chester sat at the head, he believed that the other thought he had no right there. He could not see how Chester could think anything else. When he went out to practise, the question came to him: "How many of the others has Chester told?" Rawson, of course. Marshall was afraid to go near him. In his room, his trouble came between him and his books, and he could not drive it away. Days long this lasted; this was no matter that would wear off in time. He brooded over it, kept to himself, exercised less, ate less, and studied harder. To this there could be but one result. He fell off in his practice, his pitching became poorer, and by his mistakes the school lost the next game that was played.

Chester watched Marshall; he had his own natural explanation of what was going on in the

other's mind. What could trouble him but a bad conscience? One thing, however, he did, which Marshall never expected: namely, he kept to himself the occurrence at the mill. The hints which Marshall supposed his comrades dropped of it were accidental; the meaning glances he believed he intercepted were harmless. Yet they were as hard, for him, as if Chester had not refrained from telling his thoughts even to Rawson.

As captain and catcher, however, Chester could not ignore Marshall's falling-off. He knew with how much less force his balls were thrown, with how much less accuracy they were directed. And perceiving that Marshall was actually growing thinner with his brooding, he knew that he would best prepare Jack Bray for the place, in case Marshall should give out altogether.

This at least was seen by the boys, and discussed freely. Finally Jeremy came to Marshall. "Look here," he said. "This does n't go. You'll lose your place on the nine. Do you know that Chester is coaching up Jack Bray?"

"I know," said Marshall, gloomily. "Let Jack have the place."

"Why!" cried Jeremy, "the whole school is depending on you to win the game with Woodstock.

Jack can never do it. Nor you, either, at your present rate. See here; are n't you stale? Why don't you lay off for a day or two?"

Marshall had n't the slightest intention to lay off for a day or two.

Jeremy was puzzled. "You have n't had bad news from home, have you?"

"No bad news at all."

"Well," said Jeremy, as he went, "you're stale, then, that's all. You must take care of yourself. We simply must n't lose that game. Do you realize that it comes in four days?"

As if matters had to be worse before they could be better, now entered Ben more deeply into the piece. With patience which he would never apply to his studies, Ben still kept, like an Indian, on the trail of Marshall's secret. Marshall one day innocently encouraged him to fresh endeavors. "Chester," he said, opening the subject voluntarily, "is n't so hard on me as he might be." Thinking how much Chester might have done against him, he meant what he said.

Ben saw his chance. "Indeed!" he remarked. "Even though he has told the school all about the Cup?"

Marshall answered: "Yes; even then."

"But what," asked Ben, slyly, "if I should say that he has told Mr. Holmes?"

"Mr. Holmes," replied Marshall, calmly, "saw it all as it happened."

"Oh!" said Ben, blankly.

"Look here," cried Marshall, with a sudden suspicion; "none of the boys have ever spoken to me of this but you. Have you been making it all up, Ben?"

Ben, flurried by the attack, sparred for time. "I?" he inquired, needing no art to appear astonished. "I?"

"Yes, you," insisted Marshall.

"Let me ask you this," returned Ben, with the simplest and usually the neatest way of turning a subject. "Don't you suppose Chester has been telling Mr. Holmes other things besides? About the cigarettes?"

"No!" exclaimed Marshall. "He would n't be so mean."

"Well," answered Ben, "some day I'll prove it to you." And glad to effect his escape, he marched out of the room. He went to the reading-room, and fell into talk with Mr. Hunnewell, his indulgent teacher. While they sat together a boy came with a handful of notices, and handed Mr. Hunne-

well one. "From Mr. Holmes," he said, and went away.

Mr. Hunnewell, after reading the note, held it so that Ben could almost read the words. "Would n't you like to see?" he asked.

"Oh, let me!" begged Ben. Something new was better to Ben than a week's allowance.

"It 's only a notice," said Mr. Hunnewell, unwilling to tease Ben long, "to call a meeting of the masters for to-morrow morning. It 's customary before the game."

"Why?" asked Ben.

"We give our consent for the members of our classes to play on the nine. It 's usually merely formal, but no idle boy can have the privilege."

"But I see Marshall's name there. 'Especially Marshall Moore,' it says. Why is that?"

"That," explained Mr. Hunnewell, regretting that Ben had managed to see, "is because Marshall has seemed so tired lately. It 's his physical condition in this case. You don't realize, Ben, how closely Mr. Holmes watches the boys. Well, I must go."

"But it says next," persisted Ben, "'A case for expulsion.' What 's that?"

"That 's in the lower class," replied Mr. Hunnewell. "Good-by."

He rose and went away. Ben presently wandered into the corridor. He had not gone far when he saw, lying on the floor, a paper which he recognized as one of the notices which were being distributed to the masters. He picked it up, read it again, began to smile, and then started for his room. With this he could tease Marshall. He found his room-mate studying, and handed him the paper. "There!" he said. "If you don't believe that Chester tells about you, read that. Why else should you be expelled?"

"Expelled?" cried Marshall.

"Read that!" repeated Ben. Marshall read:

Meeting of masters to-morrow morning at 8.30, to grant permission to members of nine to play in the match game. Especially Marshall Moore. A case for expulsion. Various minor matters.

J. R. HOLMES.

"If Chester has n't told about the cigarettes and the whisky," asked Ben, "why should they want to expel you?" He saw that Marshall had grown pale, and knew that he accepted the idea that the expulsion was aimed at him.

The blow at Marshall's composure was hard and shrewd. A friend had suddenly fallen away from him: Mr. Holmes had given him up. But no one

could have read in Marshall's face a sign of the pain he felt. His features became firmer, that was all, as he reminded himself of his resolution to stay in the school so long as he had a friend there. He looked up from his study of the paper. "Ben," he asked, "you 're my friend still, are n't you?"

"Oh, yes," cried Ben, surprised.

"Take that back," said Marshall, giving him the paper. "Take it away."

Ben's effort had entirely failed. "But, Marshall," he stammered, "won't you tell me about that trouble between you and Chester—your side of it, I mean?"

"Not now," answered Marshall, gently. "Some day, perhaps. Go quickly, Ben." And Ben, ashamed to acknowledge what he had done, went and returned the paper to the boy now unhappily searching for it.

Before he could go back, the bell resounded in the corridors, calling the classes to their last lessons of the day. Ben and Marshall saw each other next in the class for mathematics, and received the always unwelcome news that there was to be an examination. Paper was handed round, questions were written upon the board, and the boys were presently hard at work. In the room,

for a long while, there was to be heard nothing but the scratching of pens and the shuffling of shoes. But toward the end of the hour the master descended upon Ben. "I'll relieve you of this," he said. There was a stir in the class as the boys saw him pick up from the floor near Ben's desk a folded paper, the familiar school-room note. At the end of the hour reluctant Ben carried the note, within another note, to Mr. Holmes.

Mr. Holmes, seated in his study, read them both, and his countenance grew grave. "Shut the door, Ben," he said. Ben, sullen-faced and dejected, obeyed. "Ben," began Mr. Holmes, "you understand that Mr. Gillett accuses you of cheating in examination?"

"I did n't do it, sir," said Ben.

"The note reads: 'What's the answer to the third question?' Did you not write it?"

"No, sir."

"Do you know who did?"

"I can't tell you, sir."

"I did n't ask you to tell me," answered Mr. Holmes. "But you say that you did not write the note, and are unwilling to tell who did?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well done, Ben," commented Mr. Holmes,

in a tone that made Ben uneasy. He had chosen his ground well; he believed that he could not be reached: but as Mr. Holmes sat and studied the note he felt that more was to come. The gravity of the head-master's face, his lengthened silence, portended a good deal. But Ben waited until Mr. Holmes spoke.

"I am not a handwriting expert," began Mr. Holmes. "Besides, this scrawl is like any other boy's scrawl. Your stand is very clever, Ben. You defend yourself; you shield the rest of the class. And yet," Mr. Holmes's voice was very quiet and gentle, "for the first time in my experience I find it necessary to tell a boy that I don't believe him. Partly for this reason: no boy would ask you the answer to any question in mathematics; but partly, Ben, from what I know of your character. Do you still say that you did not write this?"

"I do, sir," muttered Ben.

"Then," said Mr. Holmes, rising, "I am going to submit this question to your classmates. You have put it out of my power to judge you myself."

Ben saw that the tables were turned. He had a wild desire to cry out as Mr. Holmes opened the door. But it was too late. Mr. Holmes stopped

a boy that was passing, and sent him to summon the second class in mathematics. Again Ben sat in silence while the boys assembled in the room. Rawson, Marshall, Chester, Jack Bray, and all the rest, were presently together.

"Boys," said Mr. Holmes, "Ben has denied that he wrote this note, which was found near his desk in the examination. That leaves an accusation upon the class in general, a matter in which I feel that I would best not interfere. I am going to leave you alone with Ben. You can look into the question yourselves; you can report to me what you decide, and suggest to me, if you come to any conclusion, the punishment you think proper. I shall be in the next room."

He went out and closed the door behind him. The boys in silence looked at Ben, and he, stealing glances at them, saw on their faces strong indignation. He remained seated till one of them should speak. All, after a while, looked at Chester to take the matter up, but he, as Ben was Marshall's room-mate, signaled to Jack Bray. Jack, therefore, spoke.

"We won't ask Ben," he said, "to say anything about the note. Mr. Holmes told us what he said; if Ben has told a lie, he need n't tell it again. It

comes to a matter of truth between Ben and us. If any boy here wrote the note, let him say so."

There was silence.

"Ben," began Jack, again, "says he did n't write the note. I say I did n't write it."

"I did n't write it," said Rawson.

"I did n't write it," said Chester.

So said the other boys, one after another, till the turn was Marshall's. He, with a glance of pity at Ben, finished the circle: "I did n't write it."

There was another silence while the boys waited for a word from Ben. But they waited in vain. He felt that now, when he least expected it, he was being judged by all his past acts, and knew that his reputation was telling against him. "Some one call Mr. Holmes," said Jack, at last.

Mr. Holmes came in, and looked from one to another of the boys. "Well?" he asked.

"We can find out nothing, sir," reported Jack.

Mr. Holmes sat down. On his forehead was a frown of pain, and his voice, when he spoke, expressed the deepest disappointment. "Very well, boys," he said. "I shall consider the matter for another twenty-four hours. You may go."

One by one the boys filed out, Ben last of all. Taking heart, he plucked Jack's sleeve. "Jack—"

"Don't speak to me, Ben," said Jack.

"Oh, I say," protested Ben. He turned to another boy, forcing a smile. "Charlie—"

"Don't speak to me," said the other boy. With the others he walked on, but Ben stopped short.

The weight of his punishment came down upon Ben suddenly. Nothing could have more completely expressed the boys' complete confidence in each other, their absolute disbelief in him. They walked along together, and Ben turned away by himself.

He wandered miserably about alone. He began to perceive where too great cleverness could lead him. He saw that to be a good companion, a witty writer, a merry singer, were nothing to the fact that his word could not be trusted. Going back again to the school, he saw that his classmates, espying him, went away before he could come near. He went to his room and found Marshall there.

"Ben," said Marshall, "why don't you—"

Ben interrupted him so angrily that Marshall said no more. They answered the bell for supper, but Ben could scarcely eat. After supper Ben noticed that the members of his class went together, as by agreement, to one of the empty classrooms, and shut themselves in.

Curiosity and fear together drew Ben to that door. He hung about, but dared not enter, or even to go close. What were the boys planning? He went away, but was drawn back again irresistibly. At last, gathering courage, he opened the door and went in.

"Here he is now," said some one. Ben winced.

The boys had been sitting together, talking quietly. Now they rose, and the face of every boy was serious. Ben stood before a company of judges, and as a trembling came over him, Jack Bray spoke.

"Ben," he said, "I guess you know what we're thinking. We think we know who wrote that note. The class is disgraced, Ben, unless *some one* owns up." Jack laid much stress upon the *some one*. "And I think the school will feel itself disgraced, too, when it knows. No boy has ever yet lied to a master here."

He paused a moment, and shrinking Ben saw from his face that something more was to come.

"The school does n't know yet," went on Jack, "but it has got to know, and we have decided to tell all the boys to-morrow at twelve. If before then *some one* does n't own up, we have promised one another not to speak to *you* until *some one*

confesses. Marshall has asked to be allowed to speak with you, and we 've granted it. None of the rest of us will. And what we do, I think the school—"

The school would do as well! Ben knew it, and he quailed. No more dreadful punishment could be devised than to cut him off from speech. To avoid that punishment, to shift the disgrace, he had only one frightened thought: to put the blame upon some one else.

"I 'll tell you now who wrote the note," he cried. "It was the boy who sat behind me!"

The boys looked at each other. Presently Marshall spoke: "I sat behind you."

"Then you did it," accused Ben. "You know you did it." He forgot the many weeks of companionship with Marshall, forgot all but the surest way to get further evidence against him and in favor of himself. Believing firmly that Chester would seize the opportunity to injure Marshall, Ben cried: "Chester saw you do it."

Marshall, his head bent forward, during the accusation watched Ben's face with gleaming eyes. Since the afternoon he had carried about with him the thought that expulsion was hanging over him, the belief that Chester had told to the masters

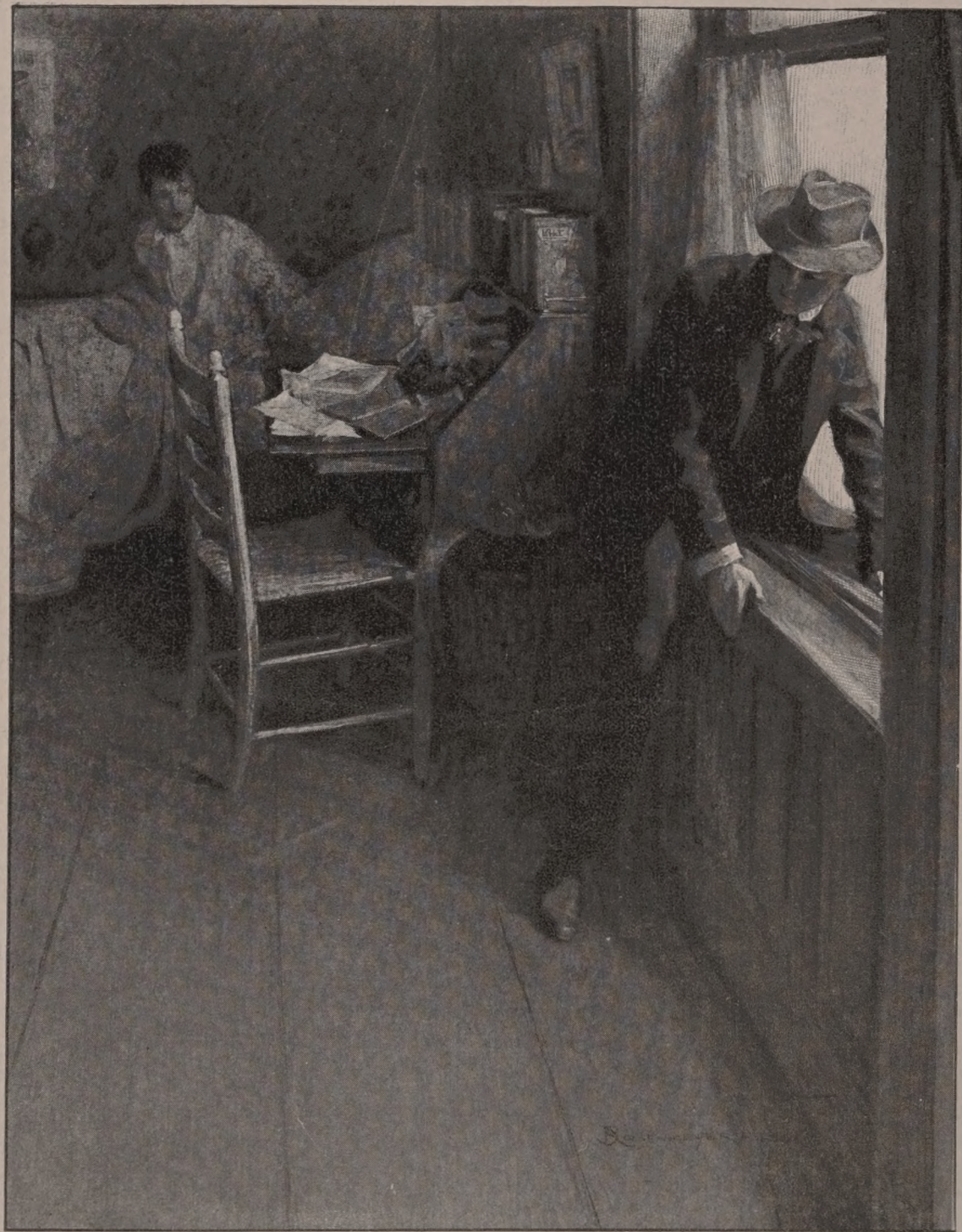
tales about him. He had trusted in Ben as his last friend in the school. Now he saw that last friend turn against him. Too long tortured by Ben's insinuations, too confused by this attack to think clearly, anger and despair crowded together in his breast. While the boys stood astonished, he turned to Chester.

"Speak up, Chester," he said. "Tell the boys that I 'm not to be trusted. Tell them more. Tell them that I smoke tobacco. Tell them I drink whisky. Tell them that you saw me write the note."

"Marshall!" cried Chester.

"Won't you tell them?" asked Marshall, bitterly. "Do you prefer to speak behind my back? Well, then, I 'll go. Tell the boys when I 'm gone."

He turned and went away, leaving behind him a breathless group. He went to his room and sat there. All was a whirl in his brain, a black confusion. His last dependence was gone. Ben's desertion left him utterly amazed, and almost prostrate. Marshall sat while the boys in the corridors, warned by the bell, went to their rooms. Last of all, like a whipped dog, Ben slunk into the room.



"HE WOULD NOT STAY TO HEAR FURTHER WORDS, BUT CLAMBERED
OUT UPON THE GUTTER."

"Ben," said Marshall, quietly, "I saw you write the note."

Ben burst into passionate sobbing. He implored forgiveness. "I forgive you," answered Marshall, with a lifeless calm. Ben could not get him to say more. They remained so, Marshall and the boy who had so terribly injured him, until the last bell rang. Then they went to bed in silence.

In the first daylight Marshall rose, dressed himself completely, gathered a few things together, and put them into a bag.

"What are you going to do?" cried Ben, who had waked and watched him.

"Ben," replied Marshall, "I am going away. I've failed in everything here. Chester is against me; it is n't like him, but he's been telling tales. Mr. Holmes must be against me, as he's considering expelling me. Chester believes he found me drinking whisky in the mill; that's enough to expel any boy. It was your whisky, Ben. I have done nothing wrong; I will not wait for the disgrace."

Ben could only gasp and sob. Marshall knotted a fish-line to his bag, opened the window, and lowered the bag to the ground. Then he turned to Ben. "Ben, good-by."

"Marshall," cried Ben, struggling with the remnants of his wretched pride, "wait! I—"

"It 's after five, Ben," answered Marshall. "I must be going. Good-by." He would not stay to hear further words, but clambered out upon the gutter. Then, as on the first night of his stay at the school, he climbed down the spout to the ground.

CHAPTER XIII



MARSHALL took one look at the long school building, and then began to walk away. For the last time he had been to school—for the last time!

It was all his own fault, he supposed. Not Ben had failed him, nor Mr. Holmes, nor Chester. Marshall had no accusations to make. So often had he failed that he had no more confidence in himself. He had a regret that he had not won Chester's friendship, and he wondered, as he went, how things had managed to go wrong. Surely he had tried to do his best. He had a dread of the pain that he would give his mother. But Chester would be glad to have him go, and to his mother he would say: "Let me stay with you always after this. Or let me go to work, earn my own living, and be a man." No more schools, no more hope of college. Marshall gave everything up.

But behind him Ben—as Marshall had done that year, as Chester had done two years before, as every boy sooner or later must do—fought with himself. He saw himself for what he was, saw all the harm he had done, and was ashamed. But he perceived, as well, that there was yet time to remedy the evil, and with every moment precious, Ben did not struggle long. The good in him conquered. He dressed quickly, and, half sobbing, ran to Chester's room.

Chester and Rawson were already awake, discussing the events of yesterday. While they listened in complete surprise, Ben told them everything: his unlucky guess on the first night of the term; his unwillingness to let the matter rest; the affair of the cigarettes; the whisky at the corn-mill—one by one he told these. At the story of the whisky, Rawson turned to Chester. "And you never told me!" he exclaimed.

"I could n't," answered Chester. "Till I was sure; it was n't fair." And Rawson forgave him.

Then, hardest of all, Ben confessed his latest faults: that he had deceived Marshall with the master's notice, had written the note in examination, and accused Marshall to shield himself. "And oh," he finished, "Marshall has run away!

But he has done nothing wrong. Can't you bring him back?"

While he spoke, Chester and Rawson had been dressing. Now they went to the window and looked out. Still visible, trudging dejectedly away, was Marshall's figure.

"We can!" exclaimed Chester. "We can! Rawson, come on!" They left the room, ran down the stairs, let themselves out at a lower window, and at once, at a quick trot, set themselves upon Marshall's path.

It was plain where he was going. Electric cars passed within a mile of the school, and he meant to take them as far as to the railroad. His way was across the fields, the view was open, and keeping him in sight, they ran faster. But Marshall, apprehensive of pursuit, from time to time glanced behind, and presently saw them. "He's running!" they cried together.

Now it was a chase. He had a long start, but was weighted by his bag; they overhauled him rapidly. Yet the road was not far off, and suddenly, skimming the bank beside it, Chester saw a flat roof with a long pole slanting up. "Oh," he gasped, "the car! We'll lose him!"

"Come on!" responded Rawson.

They ran on. Marshall disappeared from their sight at the same time as the car dipped down into a cut. They could not tell if he were in time to stop it. But when they reached the bank above the road, the car was speeding away in the distance, its conductor mindless of a figure that stood waving and despairingly shouting. The boys descended to the road.

Marshall was ready to drop. He had run fast, carrying his bag; his emotions and his disappointment were almost too much for him. Chester and Rawson were of all people the two he least wished to see. But he checked the angry sobs that were rising, and faced them defiantly. "I sha'n't go back to school," he declared.

"Marshall," answered Chester, "will you let us speak with you?"

He saw that Marshall was swaying as he stood, shaking with his deep panting. But Marshall turned away. "I 'm going on," he said, and started after the car. Chester and Rawson followed behind him for a little while, then they ranged up beside him.

"Marshall," began Chester, again, "Ben has been telling—"

"Don't speak of Ben!" commanded Marshall.

"I must," answered Chester, gently. "Ben—"

Marshall stopped abruptly and set down his bag. He faced the two boys once more. "Well, then," he said, "let us talk. But let me speak first. No,"—as Chester would have spoken again,— "let me speak. Chester, you are not the fellow I took you for."

"Ben—" began Chester, again.

"Leave Ben out of it. I came to the school, Chester, with an admiration for you. Are you surprised? I did. Two years ago I treated you shamefully. I acknowledge it. All this time I have been ashamed of it. All this time you have been a kind of ideal to me: I never did anything without asking myself what you would think of it. Do you want to know why? I was sorry for what I did; I believed you were a good fellow; I was trying to make myself like you. Astonishing!"

There was a world of irony in his voice, but Chester smiled.

"You smile? I wish I could. Chester, on the very first day I came you began to set the fellows against me. You missed two chances to put me off the nine. I did n't know why, at first. Yesterday I discovered. You were working to have me expelled from the school. Oh, I am glad that I

have found you out! Yet sorry, too!" In his voice, irony gave way to reproach.

"Marshall," began Chester, for the third time, "Ben—"

"What has Ben to do with it?" demanded Marshall. "Ah!"

A singing began in the wire overhead. A second car was coming. Chester suddenly saw that he might be too late. "I never did these things against you!" he cried. "It was Ben—he invented it all. We saw him just now; he told us—he is sorry for all he has done."

Marshall looked upon him unbelieving. "You never told any one about the Junior Cup?" he asked.

"Never!" answered Chester, firmly.

"Nor Mr. Holmes about the tobacco? Nor the whisky?"

"Never! Never!" answered Chester.

The car was drawing near. Marshall took up his bag. "Perhaps," he said scornfully, "you will even say I am not to be expelled?"

"No!" cried Chester. "That was Ben's story again."

"Ben has told us," asserted Rawson. "And Chester never told even me about the whisky."

The car was about fifty feet away. Marshall held up his hand to the motorman, and said no more. "Marshall! Marshall!" cried Chester, in despair; but Marshall's face was of iron. The car slackened speed, the brake ground heavily, then the car stopped near the boys. Marshall turned one look on each of the others. "Good-by," he said, and stepped toward the rear platform.

But a figure, and then another, descended from the car, and Marshall stopped short. Chester's heart leaped. There was Mr. Holmes, with shame-laden Ben.

"Go on," said Mr. Holmes to the conductor. The car started on. Mr. Holmes faced Marshall. "I have brought Ben," he said, "to testify to the truth of Chester's story."

Ben, fearing that Chester would not succeed in catching Marshall, had gone to Mr. Holmes and once more made his confession. The headmaster, foreseeing just where Chester's mission might fail, namely in proof, had hastened with Ben, and caught the car higher up the line. Standing there, all five together, Ben for the third time acknowledged his deeds, down to the very smallest. "And if I am expelled for it," he finished, "it's all true."

Confusion whirled in Marshall's brain. Old prejudices, obstinate beliefs, struggled against new light and truth. But they were beaten. His eyes began to shine, his mouth to smile. He turned to Chester and held out his hand. "Then we shall be friends!" he cried.

"Friends!" responded Chester, clasping hands gladly.

"But," asked Rawson of Mr. Holmes, "Ben will not be expelled?"

"Always standing up for some one?" inquired Mr. Holmes. "No; Ben shall not be expelled—if he has learned his lesson."

Ben, from his heart relieved, mumbled that he had.

"But how," asked Marshall, still looking into Chester's face, "can I pay you for all your patience with me, Chester?"

Patience Chester had had—wonderful patience. But he laughed the praise away. "Win the game to-morrow," he answered. And then, amid smiles that hid tears, they started back toward the school.

Mr. Holmes studied Marshall's face. The strain of the last fortnight was visible upon it: the boy was thin and pale. "How much he has had to

bear!" he thought. "Who would have suspected Ben? A strange discipline this has been, to bring the best out of each boy. But Marshall needs rest." He waited until they had reached the school, now just awaking, and then spoke.

"Marshall," he said, "I should like you to go down to the hotel this morning at nine; never mind lessons for to-day. You may stay at the hotel until bedtime, if you choose."

"I?" asked Marshall. "The hotel—until bedtime?" Then he understood. "Oh, Mr. Holmes, my mother is coming?"

"To see you pitch in the game," he answered.

There was no baseball practice that afternoon; all the players were resting for the great game. Who was happier that day than Marshall? more satisfied than Chester? more quietly pleased than Mr. Holmes? more thankful than Ben, to have done no more harm than he did? Marshall went to the hotel at nine, and spent the day with his mother. The story which he had to tell her was so long, and so frequently interrupted, that it lasted until bedtime. In the morning all the characters of this story, even Stukeley, were on the baseball field, to play or to watch the game.

But oh, the sad hearts of the Stonefield boys as

they saw the game begin to go against them! Marshall was batted, batted, batted. Run after run came in. "He has no control of the ball," cried the boys. Mrs. Moore almost wept as the boys on the benches near her scolded angrily. The Stonefield nine scored, in truth, but they were so far behind that it seemed hopeless. Yet Mr. Holmes came to her and said: "Wait. The game is not lost till it 's won. Marshall is pitching better every inning."

How badly he was pitching he knew. The stress he had been under had worn him long; the desperate hour of his running away had told on every nerve; and when that was past the happiness of understanding had almost finished him. His mother had petted him; the explanation with Chester had been sweet beyond words. He had scarcely slept in the night. And now in the stress of the game it took him a long while to recover himself.

The rest of the nine played faultlessly; they saved many a run by their fielding. Twice long-legged Jeremy gathered in liners that promised to be home runs. Twice Rawson stopped fierce grounders, touched the runner, and made double plays. Chester let no ball pass, caught at the plate all the time, threw marvelously to second,

and terrorized the base-runners. "They're saving me from myself," thought Marshall, and struggled to do his best. No one reproached him. "Don't speak," warned Chester, "to the man at the wheel." The nine appeared cheerful. "All right," they said to Marshall. "It's going all right. We're only a little way behind. A home run with the bases full would even put us ahead." "Ah!" groaned Marshall, "but we sha'n't get it."

It came. In the fifth inning Marshall made a base hit. By Woodstock errors the bases were filled. Then Chester came to the bat. He was the best batsman. The crowd at the benches ceased to shout. This was Stonefield's chance; would Chester take it? He stood at the plate quietly and let balls pass till strikes were called on him—once, twice. Then he got the ball he wanted, and swung at it. Crack! Oh, the confusion, the exhilaration, the mad, mad racing and shouting, of that short minute! The left-fielder ran and ran and ran. Chester passed first and second bases and neared third. Then the ball began to travel back. Chester saw and took the risk. The ball reached the catcher's hands as the Stonefield captain, with a long slide, touched home base. Stonefield was one run ahead.

And then for three long innings steadily they struggled. Marshall at last began to pitch as he should; neither side scored. They stood as they were through the sixth and seventh and eighth innings; the ninth began. The Stonefields were first at bat; the Woodstocks shut them out. And then, when the Woodstock batters took their turn, it seemed as if Marshall had once more lost himself.

The first man made a base hit. The fear of Chester kept him from second, but the second man got his base on balls. Then the third, by a bunt, took first, and the others moved around. The bases were full, no one was out. All Stonefield groaned. An accident, a passed ball, a base hit, and two men could come in. "Wait, wait!" said all the Woodstock coaches. The game was almost certainly theirs. And when the next man came to the bat the umpire called three balls and not a single strike.

Chester walked with the ball half-way to the pitcher's box. Marshall met him. The Woodstock players smiled. "Too late. There is no trick now that can save the game." Chester, as he handed the ball to Marshall, looked his new friend in the eye. He gave a smile of confidence.

"Now, dear boy," he said. He walked back to his place, adjusting his mask.

And Marshall felt like a giant at the words. There was still time. He and Chester could yet win the game together. One thing more was wanting. He looked among the spectators until he found his mother's face. The umpire was impatiently calling "Play!" when he stepped to the box again.

Then Marshall pitched nine balls.

Do not read, you who have no interest in the mystery of curves. The first ball sped for the plate; the batter struck, but the ball shot in and dropped. The second was so straight and swift that the batter had no time to move. "Two strikes!" the umpire called. The third seemed straight again; the batter struck. The ball rose beautifully over his bat, and the man was out.

The second came. Marshall threw his first ball almost at him. He started back; the ball curved out over the plate. "One strike!" The second ball seemed to be going far to the other side; the batter stood at ease till it shot in and passed him, too late. "Two strikes!" The third ball came straight and slow; he gathered himself to strike, and the field held its breath. As he

struck, the ball seemed to stand still in mid-air, then fall. Chester caught it at his ankles. The second man was out. Only one more.

Only one man more, but he was the most dangerous—the Woodstock captain. If he were put out, the game was won; but should he hit the ball squarely—! Marshall coolly beckoned the fielders in. “Play for the batter”; and he pitched his last three balls.

The first—ah, sickening it was to the batter as he saw it change direction as he struck. He tried in vain to reach it; it shot beyond the end of his bat, where Chester was standing to receive it. The second seemed about to go low, lower than his knees. He stood still. It shot up almost to the level of his hips, and the umpire called the strike. The whole field stirred and murmured as Marshall made ready for his last. The Woodstock captain braced himself. Marshall signaled the out-drop, and threw a slow and easy ball. The batter waited; he was no man to strike too soon. Then he almost threw himself off his feet as he struck. But the ball, twisting downward and outward, passed safely into the waiting hands, and the game was won!

The school exhausted itself cheering. Marshall



"MARSHALL WAS CHAIRED AND SHOULDERED TILL NO ONE HAD
STRENGTH TO LIFT HIM."

was chaired and shouldered till no one had strength to lift him. They carried him round the diamond, to the school, and along the whole front of the building. They stopped at the spout that he had climbed, and shouted till they were hoarse. They carried him to the chapel door and sang the school song. They brought him into the building, and along the echoing corridors bore him in spite of his protests. They would not let him down. They took him to the dining-room, hung with the trophies of former years, and telling him that he had won another silver cup to decorate the walls, they cheered him till they could cheer no more. And then they let him down, and he slipped away.

Mr. Holmes and Chester, as head-master and captain of the nine, did the final honors to the departing Woodstock team. When they were gone, Mr. Holmes sought Mr. Fiske, to tell him another story of his boy. And Chester found Rawson, who had been waiting.

"Come," said Chester, "we have n't had our chance at Marshall. Perhaps he's in his room. Let's go there." They went and knocked. No one answered, but they opened the door. There sat Mrs. Moore, bending over her boy, who knelt

at her feet. They saw that his frame was shaking with sobs, that her tears were falling on his head. Very quietly they started to withdraw.

But she saw them, and stretched out her arms. "Oh, dear boys," she cried, "you have kept your promise. Let me thank you. Come in, come in!"

And Marshall, with a happy face, sprang up and brought them to his mother.





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